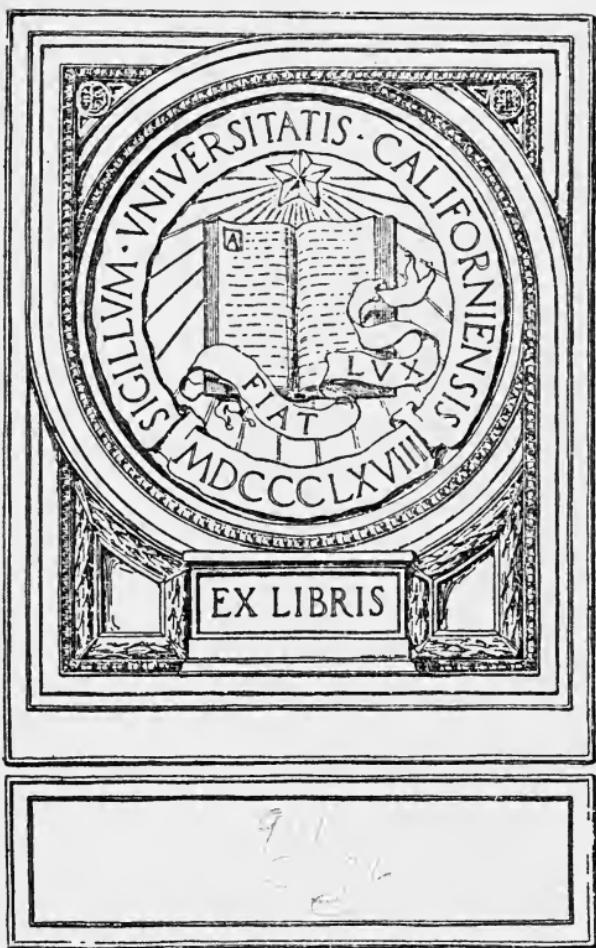


An Enthusiast

By E. C. SOMERVILLE





AN ENTHUSIAST

By

E. & SOMERVILLE AND MARTIN ROSS

SOME EXPERIENCES OF AN IRISH R.M.
FURTHER EXPERIENCES OF AN IRISH R.M.
IN MR. KNOX'S COUNTRY
ALL ON THE IRISH SHORE
SOME IRISH YESTERDAYS
AN IRISH COUSIN
THE REAL CHARLOTTE
THE SILVER FOX
IRISH MEMORIES
MOUNT MUSIC
STRAY-AWAYS

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
LONDON NEW YORK BOMBAY
CALCUTTA AND MADRAS

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E. O. SOMERVILLE

AUTHOR OF

'THE REAL CHARLOTTE,' 'SOME EXPERIENCES
OF AN IRISH R.M.' 'IRISH MEMORIES,' 'MOUNT
MUSIC,' 'STRAY-AWAYS,' ETC., ETC.

IN COLLABORATION WITH

MARTIN ROSS

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defining words

To
MY COLLABORATOR

475888



P R E F A C E

There is something arrogant, if not offensive, in an attitude of Impartiality, and to be strictly impartial is to be equally disliked by all sides. In trying to keep an even keel in very stormy seas I have risked this disaster.

The people in this story all view Ireland from different angles, and each speaks for him or herself, and not for me.

On one point only are we all agreed—in love for the country that bore us, that ardent country in which the cold virtue of Impartiality is practically unknown.

E. O. S.

May, 1921.



AN ENTHUSIAST

CHAPTER I

DANIEL HENRY PALLISER, long and gaunt and unshaven, in the bedroom array of unfinished influenza, defied his nurse, and, getting out of bed, accepted, perforce, the stout arm that she proffered, and tottered to the window to watch events.

These had now culminated. The sound of feet in the passages and on the stairs, first hurrying, finally burdened and shuffling, had ceased. The focus of interest was transferred from his father's bedroom to the broad gravelled space outside the hall door. Dan looked down, interested, and, as it seemed to him, unmoved. He couldn't understand himself. 'It isn't as if I didn't care,' he thought, apologising to his conscience on behalf of his heart, 'I used to feel it awfully when I said good-bye to him going back to the trenches.'

In the middle of the crowd, under Dan's window, of men and women and carriages and horsemen, was something that took and held the searching sunlight of a north-westerly March day. A Union Jack, its coarse red, white, and blue shouting to Dan its long story of victory, while it hid the coffin that was taking his father away from the life that had ended for him in what had virtually been defeat. Eight men separated themselves from the throng and ranged themselves

by the bier. The old Colonel's shining brass-scabbarded sword, and the shako of a long-past soldiering day, lay on the coffin. A girl placed an immense cross of blazing yellow daffodils upon the gaudy flag that intensified, if that were possible, its gaudiness.

Two black figures, Dan's mother and his cousin, Eileen Caulfield, the girl who had brought the cross, stood in an open space behind the coffin ; round them were gathered a circle of discs that represented to Dan the sky-ward aspects of the top-hats of uncles and cousins ; his father's younger brother, Sir James Palliser, K.C.M.G., and his son Ralph ; his mother's three brothers, Admiral Richard Caulfield, C.B., the Rev. Horace Caulfield, Mr. Trevor Caulfield. Gradually Dan identified them all, and tried not to feel indecently thankful that he was not among them.

Thronging round the top-hats were the men and women who had been Colonel Palliser's tenants. There was a hearse, but it was filled with flowers ; the men who had been his tenants had claimed the right to carry to his grave the man who had been their landlord.

The bearers braced themselves to their load and started, and from the hooded tenant-women rose the *caoine*, the Irish cry, a sound torturing in its poignancy, violent, desolating.

Dan, made feeble by illness, felt it physically ; it was like a stab of actual pain ; yet he thought, gloryingly, 'They are keening him ! . . . I wonder if he hears. . . . *He* wouldn't care very much, but I do ! . . . They haven't given us up yet ! They know our hearts are Irish, even though our name isn't ! In spite of Sinn Fein, they haven't given up the Old Stock !'

Between the bare trees the long procession went.

Many more carriages, motors, carts, and riders, came forth from the yard and the back avenue where they had bided their time, and followed, crawling in the wake of the foot-people. In South and West Munster the true greatness of a funeral is measured by the number of riders. Colonel Henry Daniel Palliser was escorted from Monalour House to the vault in the old burying place by close on a hundred horsemen.

Dan stood watching the dancing, springy rise and fall of the single spot of brilliance in all that dark crowd. It was as if the brightest of the summer flower-beds had taken to itself legs and was gaily setting forth to see the world. The leafless branches bent in the gusts of wind that swept across the wide spaces of grass beyond the drive. The black cloud that had lain in wait behind the trees, beyond the lake, rushed up with the wind and hid the sun. The Union Jack, and the flashing scabbard, and the blazing daffodils, passed in shadow out of sight.

Dan did not wait, as did his nurse, to count the carriages and the riders. He walked shakily back to his bed, and felt that his temperature had gone up again and that intelligent thought was beyond his reach. He had never known his father other than as an old man ; he had loved him, not tremendously, but sincerely. His last distinct reflection was a congratulation to himself that his mother need never know that he had been unable to shed a tear. His mother liked things to be done decently and in order. Internal weeping was useless, and of no credit or advantage to anyone.

The position of landless landlord is now a familiar one. As young horses of this generation accept with

calm the bicycles and motors to which their parents died unreconciled, so did Daniel Henry Palliser step into the shoes that had caused acute suffering to his father, and find them endurable. What he found less endurable was the determination of his mother and his uncles to polish those shoes, to lace them up tightly, to act, as it were, the part of boot trees, and to keep them in shape, without reference to their new owner.

On the day when Dan first was well enough to go downstairs, it happened that his mother had convened a family council of such of her brothers as had temporarily assembled in honour of her husband's funeral. Dan, walking weakly into the drawing-room, already fatigued by the effort of coming downstairs, his forces all set towards the big sofa by the fireplace, and peace, found the big sofa covered with uncles, and a female cousin and two aunts-in-law encircling his mother and the tea-table.

'Why here's the Man of the House himself!' exclaimed Aunt Eleanor, with an attempt, ponderous as herself, at a touch of festivity in her welcome. She took Dan's large, bony hand, yellow and flabby from illness, and dragged him down to her level, protruding her lightly moustached lips until they touched his cheek.

Deep sounds came from three uncles on the sofa. Formless because of cake, but cordial.

'Can't get up, dear boy,' said Uncle Dick, the Admiral. 'Should capsize my tea if I stirred—very glad to see you down again!'

Assenting murmurs, as from bumble-bees in the hearts of flowers, arose from the tea-cups of the remaining uncles, and blended with Dan's acknowledgments, drowned them in fact; but the mutual good intention was sufficiently obvious.

Dan was six feet three inches in height ; square-shouldered, and long-legged. Although he was now six and twenty, he was still singularly unaware of his personal advantages, being, as a rule, engrossed in other and, as it seemed to him, more important matters. To-day, he felt that influenza had unnerved him for the effort of looking down upon a roomful of seated people from that altitude where, like a star, he dwelt apart ; baulked of his anticipated sofa, he lowered himself to the fender-stool, coiling into an invertebrate heap upon it, as treacle pours from a spoon, and thought with anguish of his lonely bedroom fire.

' You'll have to let the house Georgina,' said Uncle Horace, in evident pursuance of an earlier theme. ' Think of the Death Duties ! I simply ask you, my dear Georgina, to think of them ! '

Georgina, who was Dan's mother, replied grimly, and with some pardonable exaggeration, that she never thought of anything else, and—

But her brother, the Rev. Horace Caulfield, who had only paused oratorically, and disliked interruption, being unused to it either at home or in the pulpit, raised an arresting hand.

' Let the house ! ' he repeated. ' Dismiss the servants, *and* the farm-people——' (he glanced at his nephew). ' Look at the position ! You ask me " What is to be done ? " ' Uncle Horace looked commandingly at his sister. Uncle Horace was the rector of a parish in a neighbouring county, and was an autocrat.

Nothing was farther from Mrs. Palliser's mind than asking for advice, except, perhaps, taking it, and her brother, being well aware of an idiosyncrasy which he shared with her, hurried on with his pronouncement.

' Go to London, take a little flat there, and live

within your means ! ' His eye met that of his nephew, and, with an artist's regret for a marred peroration, he added ' Ahem ! and you too, Dan ! '

' No thanks,' said Dan ; but since the uncles on the sofa were warmly expressing agreement, his dissent attracted no attention, and was not even heard by Aunt Sophie, Uncle Horace's wife, who was sitting near him in a tiny chair at the corner of the fireplace.

' But what will poor Dan do in London ? ' said Aunt Sophie, who was an almost imperceptible little English-woman, and was barely visible when Uncle Horace was in the room.

Dan shot a look at her from under his dark brows. It was amusing that little Aunt Sophie should step out as his champion. He liked her ; she seldom walked over him, and when she did she took off her boots ; unlike the rest of them, he thought.

' What will the robin do then, poor thing ? ' murmured Eileen Caulfield, the Admiral's daughter, catching Dan's eye.

Dan laughed, not because he was amused, but because he felt he was getting angry, and he did not wish it to be recognised.

His mother had heard Eileen's comment and Dan's laugh, and disapproved of both. She was in the habit of disapproving of most things that young people did or said.

' Dan must judge for himself,' she said coldly.

' I won't go to London,' said Dan, on the lowest note of his register, sinking deeper into his coils.

He abhorred this public discussion of what was to be done with the house, the land, the home, that were, after all, his. Uncles and aunts had formed a towering hedge round him since he was a baby. He had broken

through it when he went to the War, and he would do so again ; in the meantime it was less trouble to let them talk.

' Now *I've* got an idea ! ' exclaimed Aunt Eleanor, with an explosive elation that suggested the rarity of the occurrence. ' Get a tenant for this house, as Horace says, for a year or two, and Georgina and Dan can live at the Lake House ! '

Mrs. Palliser seldom cared for other people's ideas, and least of all for those of her sisters-in-law ; it was unfortunate that the suggestion seemed to her to be sound. Poor Henry had done up the Lake House so nicely for the Robertses, and then the tenants had come to terms, and an agent was not wanted ; and the house was still empty.

' So much depends on whether it would be even *possible* to let this house,' she said aloud with severity. ' Who wants to come to Ireland *now*, I should like to know ? No one in their senses ! '

But Aunt Eleanor, as she said afterwards to Uncle Dick, saw that Georgina had realised *at once* that it was *the* thing to do, only she could not bear to admit it.

' *I'll* tell you who'll take the house ! ' said Dan's youngest uncle, Mr. Trevor Caulfield, alertly, ' Ducarrig—Arnold Gilmour that was, y'know—I met him at the Club last month, just before poor Henry's—h'm, h'm—' Uncle Trevvie, who was not a day over fifty, and was regarded by his elder brethren as a young and giddy worldling, checked himself, remembering in time that his widowed sister would disapprove of her bereavement being treated as a mere date in his social calendar.

' Ducarrig said,' he continued hurriedly, ' that he

was looking for a place in Ireland. Connaught, he *said*, because I remember old Frank Fitzmaurice said "Hell or Connaught," and Ducarrig said he wasn't particular ! ' Uncle Trevvie laughed with the innocent pleasure that is often derived by such as he from the libertine use of a word with whose official and time-honoured wickedness familiarity has been unable to breed contempt.

'I met Ducarrig when he was Governor down at Santa Caterina—that red-hot hole just below the Line,' cut in the Admiral, a small and robust man, who was inclined to assume a professional breeziness. 'He's sampled hell, I can tell you ! No wonder he wants to try Connaught ! He's had a lot of Governorships all over the East. He did mighty well in a row somewhere, and they gave him a title. He made a pot o' money out of rubber, I believe. You could ask him a whacking rent, Georgina ! '

'He's got an uncommon pretty wife,' said Uncle Trevvie, anxious to regain the lead, 'but he looks old enough to be her father ! '

'And so he is too, he's twenty-five years older than she is, if he's a day ! ' gobbled the Admiral, who, well aware that in this particular suit he held better cards than his brother, was resolved on playing them. 'She hardly looked eighteen when I saw them—but that was nearly ten years ago. Children ? No, no children. I believe there was a baby, but it died—never was another.'

'Eighteen, was she, ten years ago, did you say, Dick ? ' said Aunt Eleanor, thoughtfully, 'then that would make her at *least* eight and twenty now.' She looked round the circle with some mild elation.

'Obviously ! ' said Mrs. Palliser cuttingly ; she

had not yet forgiven Mrs. Caulfield for having anticipated her in thinking of the Roberts' house.

'But that scarcely affects the position,' she continued, 'the points to be ascertained are whether Lord Ducarrig has already got a house, and if Munster would suit him. Lady Ducarrig's age need not trouble us.'

Eileen Caulfield, daughter of the Admiral, looked at Dan, her only contemporary present. Their eyes met, and the thought travelled to and fro on the glances, how dull these elders were !

'Then there's the question of the demesne,' pursued Mrs. Palliser, 'I dislike letting it for grazing. Graziers' cattle do so much mischief.'

Dan uncoiled his long legs and stood up. Something in Eileen's vivid glance had stung his spirit ; he felt that she thought he also was old and stuffy and very poor-spirited. He squared his shoulders and looked round upon the council of elders with a frown. Eileen Caulfield, watching him, thought 'He *is* good-looking ! I'm glad I annoyed him ! He ought always to be in a rage when he's photographed !'

Dan was not in a rage, but colour had come to his face and his eyes were bright.

'After all, mother,' he said, 'as Aunt Sophie says, I must have something to do. Why shouldn't I farm the demesne ? '

He was too much of a gentleman to remind his mother that the place was his, but Eileen thought, with annoyance, that he was afraid of asserting himself.

CHAPTER II

A YOUNG summer morning ; one of those pale, shining mornings early in June when summer has hardly realised that she is out of the schoolroom, and is no longer spring, and hesitates on the threshold of her kingdom. Thus she wavered, palpitating in all her little leaves, down by the Lake of Monalour, with faint, all-pervading blue haze, breathed by the thin East wind, dimming the outlines of hill and wood, turning the mirror-still lake into a silver secret, without margin or limit. Rhododendrons in fullest blaze of blossom covered the two nearest islets, huge domes of that strange colour in which rose and mauve and azure fuse, with a passion that merges the individual tones into one unearthly, blinding pallor.

Young Lady Ducarrig stood on the lake shore, the mat of brown and grey broken rushes, washed up by the winter-waves, soft under her feet, the strip of brown and grey gravel curving away from her on either hand. The sky was of pearl, the water of pearl too, with the reeds doubled in its stillness. A cuckoo's voice, far away and sweet, tossed its challenge, soft and light as thistledown, across the lake.

Car Ducarrig took it all, wordlessly, into her soul. Words there must be to recall, or to attempt to re-create ; but there comes, sometimes, one ineffable instant when the spirit of the thing seen overwhelms the human spirit that sees, and vision and gazer unite in a single gesture of eternal beauty.

The wife of the new tenant of Monalour, having gazed her fill over what were now her husband's domains, heaved a long, almost, judging by her entirely prosperous appearance, an extravagantly long sigh. She was young, handsome, and, as the least skilled observer could have deduced from her clothes, rich. In short, the observer, noting these points, would have been justified in attributing the sigh to nothing more than an æsthetic emotion inspired by romantic surroundings. Lady Ducarrig herself, however, though often disposed to introspection, made, on this occasion, no attempt to analyse her emotions, and told herself without elaboration that this was an improvement on Santa Caterina, and (with memories, vague, it is to be feared, of long-ago Sunday lessons) that it was good to be here, and that she would like to build three altars. One should be to the philanthropist who planted the rhododendrons, and one to that dashing blade (not a day over fifty) whom she thought of (very unsuitably) as 'Old Trevvie Caulfield'; and the third? She was not sure about the third. To Arnold, perhaps, since he, having seen Monalour, had had the intelligence to fall in love with it. Yet, taking Arnold maturely into consideration, she could not but feel that altars weren't in his line. She laughed a little, and definitely decided that she would not raise an altar to Arnold. In any case, this was not the moment.

She had, as a matter of fact, a sterner task in hand. To her, that morning, had been preferred a grave complaint as to the inadequacy of the scullery drain, and she was now on her way to interview the landlord on the subject. She trusted that it might not be her fate to meet the landlady instead. She felt that Mrs. Palliser might not be too easy to handle, while the

large young man (thus she thought of Dan) would probably yield readily to treatment.

She left the shore and returned to the path that led through the shrubberies of Monalour to the Lake House. The path followed the line of the lake ; she loitered along it, with the lazy, irregular step of one who is better used to wasting time than to saving it ; noting everything, the satin-white stems of the young birches, the tall herons standing by their nests in the branches of a group of Scotch firs, the polished black coots, with their white phylacteries bound on their brows, fleeing across the path to their reed sanctuaries, pursued by her dogs, a white Highland terrier and a red setter, who had accepted her as a pretext for a hunting expedition, and were accompanying her intermittently. She was rather short-sighted ; a disability that is not without compensations ; in Lady Ducarrig's case the limitation made chiefly for enhanced concentration on what she was able to see. Her interest in all people, and most things, was only intensified by the effort of seeing them.

Mrs. Palliser was away. The landlord, whom she met outside the house, stated the fact in his deep and gloomy voice, and Lady Ducarrig wondered if his mother's absence accounted for the gloom. 'Or perhaps it is that she's coming home !' she thought, with a backward glance at her impression of Mrs. Palliser. 'If he's like most landlords, he'll be considerably gloomier by the time I've done with him and the scullery drain !'

She addressed herself to her task, but that Dan did not share the reluctances of his class was even absurdly apparent.

'Poor is the conquest of the timid hare !' thought

the hare's tenant. 'Mamma would have been a far more sporting proposition!'

Lady Ducarrig was but two years older than her landlord, but she knew by instinct (which, being unreasonable, cannot be disputed) that were she to die to-morrow, and he to live to the fullest span of human life, he would never be as old as she felt. In her outlook upon the world, the spirit of the collector was combined with that of the connoisseur. To try the flavour of a temperament, to weigh the relative social values of good looks and good clothes, of good talk and good nature, of good features and good colouring, these, and such as these, were matters on which, with a fellow expert, she would wrangle, languidly, tenaciously, agreeably, for as long as the fellow expert could or would face her. Since, two months before, she had come to Monalour, she had seen Dan but seldom, and ever in the large and heavy shadow of his mother. To-day it seemed possible to discover him. His type was new to her collection. A zealot and an enthusiast, his eyes told her that; and a reformer; this she had gathered from his uncle Trevor (who had a low opinion of such). Finally, he had the not unusual, yet indisputable merit of being a man. Car Ducarrig had many and devoted friends among women, and, from the more intelligently devoted of such, she did not attempt to conceal the fact that she found men, in general, more interesting to her than women. She was accustomed to apologise for this preference, admitting its old-fashioned conventionality, as well as its tendency to cause trouble. Just as she adored and cultivated the affectations and absurdities of dogs, so did she regard with amused interest and indulgence the foibles of the men of her acquaintance. Possibly

she recognised the old plea for forgiveness of sins, that they 'loved much'; if she forgot it, it was certainly seldom their fault that she was permitted to do so.

The view from the bench on the lawn of the Lake House was beautiful enough to make nothing seem more important than the need of looking at it. Lady Ducarrig had refused to go into the house, and having drifted to the bench, found herself incapable of leaving it. Were any further inducement needed to idle away the shining morning, it would have been supplied to her by her dogs, who, having made the discovery, fraught with delirium, that two ladies of their race were concealed under the bench on which their mistress and Dan were seated, were now, by every device known to them, from coquetry to intimidation, endeavouring to lure them forth.

From the beleaguered charmers came a continuous chorus of indrawn, sob-like growls, and while the landlord, with masculine conscientiousness, solemnly dealt with the methods by which he proposed to subjugate the erring scullery drain, his tenant, absorbed in expert appreciation of the humours of the contest, heard no word of his painstaking explanations.

'So you see, Lady Ducarrig,' Dan concluded, 'I'm afraid I could hardly get the mason and the plumber before—'

'Oh, Mr. Palliser,' interrupted the tenant ardently, '*make them come out and be civil!*'

'Who? What?' said Dan, 'the mason?' He paused, regarding her with grave eyes of bewilderment. 'What? Oh, the dogs—Oh, certainly! Here Peggy! Lizzie! Come out o' that!' He twisted a leg under the bench, and with his foot scooped out a corpulent black spaniel and a little wizened fox-

terrier, who instantly sped to the house, pursued as by a storm by their admirers.

' Did you want them ? ' asked Dan, still bewildered.

Lady Ducarrig did not spend time in explanation. ' The masons, yes ! The dogs, no ! ' she said, enjoying his conscientiousness in much the same discriminating spirit as that in which she had adored the colour of the rhododendrons or the proceedings of the dogs. ' I don't want them in the least ! I believe I'm wasting your time horribly, and keeping you from your work—I don't know what it is ? Not desperately important, I hope ? '

Her voice was low and slow and seductive ; Dan had never heard a voice like it. His eyes, steel-coloured or hazel, Car had not yet decided which, met hers. He had the eyes that are seen oftenest in Southern countries, deep-set, with thick black lashes, short and curled. As he looked at her she perceived that they held a grievance.

' Farming is my work. Important enough, though no one seems to think so ! ' he said, in his deep voice.

' Oh *I* do ! '

' Do you really ? ' He hung fire for a moment, eyeing her uncertainly. He was unused to either sympathy or perfidy, and was unable to realise that they may go hand in hand. Then his subject mastered him. ' I'm up against every sort of tradition and prejudice—I'm trying to farm the demesne here—you can hardly imagine the difficulties ! '

' Sinn Fein ? ' Lady Ducarrig exhibited less interest than she felt. She was curious as to his politics, having been told that they were ' shaky. '

' No, not as yet—the trouble is with my own men and their prehistoric methods.'

Car's grey eyes were raised to his.

' Oh, Mr. Palliser, how *maddening* ! '

Dan opened like a long-tentacled sea-anemone in the warm tide of sympathy. He told her how he wanted to break up the Big Lawn (' that's the grass between the house and the lake, what you would call the park,' he explained), and expatiated on its poverty and its weeds ; on the obstinacy of all farm-men, and their assurances that weeds were to be valued and respected as a mark of good land—'*Weeds!*' His smouldering resentment burst into flame. ' Docks and thistles ! '

Car was touched. Weedy land seemed to her a pathetically dull subject to take seriously. Presenting to her host a sympathetic attention that effectually over-laid the amused under-current of critical analysis that she was bringing to bear upon him, Car sat, idle and entertained, on the bench on the Lake House lawn, and the sea-anemone continued to expand.

She had smoked two of Dan's cigarettes, and had tapped his confidence on many matters as to which her ignorance was only equalled by her skill in concealing it, before she decided that the investigation had, for the present, gone far enough.

' Now, having thoroughly wasted your morning, I'm going away.'

Her manner, languidly blunt, had a charm of its own. ' Car has a delightful manner, and no manners,' said one of her friends.

' Good-bye ! Oh, my stick—under the seat, I'm afraid—'

Dan went down on his hands and knees and groped for the stick. She thought his back looked as long as a polo-pony's. Then, still on his knees, he handed it

to her. Car Ducarrig never checked an impulse, however unconventional or absurd. She laid the stick lightly across his shoulders, and said,

‘Rise, Sir Daniel Palliser !’

Dan, bewildered anew, stared up at her, still on his knees, and Eileen Caulfield, who was, as it happened, at that moment getting out of her boat at the end of the garden, found the situation difficult of comprehension.

Car moved serenely away, satisfied that she had achieved something of an artistic climax to an interview that in less capable hands might not have risen above the level of the scullery drain.

‘It’s a nice monster,’ she said to herself, as she strolled along the path through the flickering greens of the young leaves, ‘and delightful looks ! I *like* eyes that look like burnt holes in a blanket ! And a very good figure—remarkably so—for a monster. And that Caulfield girl’s got good looks too—I really am mad about looks !’ she told herself, with a laugh. ‘I wonder how poor Sir Daniel will explain the affair of the walking-stick ! She’ll think I’m mad certainly ! I rather wish I were——’ Her mood changed, and the smile that came with the mood made her face look old. ‘It would give Arnold such pleasure to pack me off to an asylum ; a nice private one ; very expensive, out of respect to his lofty position ’

CHAPTER III

THE 'looks' that Lady Ducarrig had conceded to Eileen Caulfield were more or less beyond dispute. Most people admitted them without dissent; her father, the Admiral, went so far as to say that *he* called her a d——d pretty girl, and he didn't care who didn't; and, when her hair and complexion were given the consideration due to them, the Admiral's contention was justified.

'Father sent me over to borrow a cart and horse for this afternoon,' said Eileen to Dan. While she spoke, her eyes were noting every detail of his late visitor's departing figure. 'I shouldn't lend it if I were you! If father won't keep a horse and cart for himself I should let him hire!'

It was characteristic of Dan's relatives that in requests of this kind they used the impersonal indefinite article, never the possessive pronoun that implied his ownership. Equally was it characteristic of Eileen that she wished him to refuse the request.

'Oh, rot!' said Dan. 'Of course he can have it. I'm just going up to the men now. They're cutting hay in the lower paddock'—he hesitated—'like to come too?'

Dan and Eileen had grown up side by side. This is an accident, or a condition, that does not necessarily imply friendship, but there was a tacit understanding that, among Dan's numerous cousins, Eileen was the one appointed, or selected, to be his friend. This had

been the position in that period known as Before-the-War, that had already, in 1920, begun to be regarded with condescension as remote and old-fashioned. It was six years now since Dan had spurned his College at Cambridge and had rushed forth to fight for his country. He had been only twenty, and Eileen eighteen. There had then been moments, softening moments, of farewell, full of the unspoken thought that they might never meet again, and he had kissed her with decidedly more emotion than was warranted by the special and cousinly friendship. Then Dan had returned, a temporary hero, with a wound and a Military Cross, and the temperature of the special friendship had risen another point or two, but it had never attained any official status. Then Dan, having (as the Admiral said, disparagingly) gone mad about farming, had refused to return to Cambridge, and had been absorbed by an Agricultural College for two years, and all that had been special in the friendship with Eileen had subsided imperceptibly. Latterly, since his father's death, he sometimes felt as if she despised him. She had many times told him he took things too easily. (But he had always known that Eileen had a way of starting rows and keeping out of them herself.)

Now, as they walked together along the path to Monalour, Dan knew that she was annoyed with him.

'How on earth does she think I could refuse to lend Uncle Dick a cart?' he thought. He did not know that if annoyance has not scope to demonstrate in one direction it will do so in another.

They left the shade of the shrubberies and, as they came into the wide sunlight, they saw, some little distance away, the person of whom they were both

thinking, sitting on a big boulder by the edge of the lake.

‘How do you like her?’ said Eileen.

‘Oh, fair to moderate,’ said Dan, whipping off the end of a thistle with his stick. ‘I’ve only met her twice or three times. She’s better looking than I thought,’ he added.

‘She’s very well dressed,’ said Eileen coldly.
‘What did she want?’

‘Something wrong about a drain.’

Then he thought of the accolade and wondered how much Eileen had seen.

‘She’s—well, she’s rather unexpected. I shouldn’t be surprised if she were awfully bored here.’

‘I suppose you went on your knees to her to ask her to excuse our country manners?’

‘Oh, that—’ said Dan awkwardly, ‘that was nothing. I was just picking up her stick—’

He said to himself that he wouldn’t try to explain. He would only bungle it, and Eileen would for ever after bore him about it. Anyhow, it was a nuisance. He wanted to talk of other things.

When a subject possessed Dan Palliser it held him night and day; it filled his mind like an incoming tide, submerging all other things.

‘I suppose you know I’ve taken over the farm? Since the first of the month. I’ve deposed Tom McLoughlen. He was hopeless. I don’t know how my father stood him. I’m going on different lines altogether.’

‘What does your mother say?’

Dan did not reply. He was looking in front of him. His head was thrust forward, his heavy eyebrows were drawn down.

Eileen watched him with a sidelong look, without moving her head. ‘Aunt Gina had better look out !’ she thought. ‘She didn’t give him that big rock of a chin for nothing.’

‘This is *my* show now,’ said Dan, as if he were talking to himself. ‘I’m going to run it my own way.’

‘Yes, she’s pushed him too hard !’ Eileen’s quick thought ran on. ‘He’s like cement, soft and sloppy enough at first, and then—stone ! She’s let him harden the wrong way. I’m glad !’

Aloud, she said coolly, ‘Well, don’t run too fast !’

It seemed as if he had not heard. He walked on across the grass in silence. At the top of a slope he stood still. The broad spaces of the Big Lawn slanted away between two long plantations to the lake. A few young cattle lay among the tall daisies that whitened the grass between drifts of thistles. From behind one of the plantations came the travelling roar of a mowing-machine, a sound that is of the very essence of the time of fair weather, as though the mills of summer were grinding out heat.

‘There’s where I’m going to begin the tillage. It’ll spoil the look of the place, but that can’t be helped.’

‘You did well not to let the grazing,’ said Eileen. ‘All the grazier’s cattle in the Kennedys’ demesne were driven the night before last. Colonel Kennedy wrote to tell father. He said the wretched grazier was collecting them from all round the country.’

‘Poor devil !’ said Dan.

‘All the gates were broken. The old Colonel told father he’s going to give the grazier a revolver, and he’ll arm all his own men. Perfectly idiotic, of course !’

‘They’d be as likely to shoot old Kennedy himself as the cattle drivers ! How does he know they’re not

in it up to their necks themselves ?' said Dan, with a short laugh. ' Any way, the police will collar the arms as soon as they hear about them.'

' Of course,' agreed Eileen. ' Father talks a lot of rubbish about a man's doing what he likes with his own. Who can call anything his own now, I'd like to know ! '

The matter appeared to them both to offer no case for argument ; the ' driving ' of the grazier's cattle being in much the same category as a flood, or a thunder storm, and, like the blind malignity of nature, something to which resistance was futile.

They had reached the hayfield ; the mowing-machine was nearing them, the horses, chestnut and grey, moving with the governed lightness that bespoke them for what they were, or rather had been, hunters, who now, their days of speed and sport past, were labouring on the land they once galloped over.

The clattering roar of the machine approached Dan and Eileen in a smooth crescendo of sound that an orchestra might emulate in vain. The thin grass flowed over the long blade like the curling waves that run out right and left from the bows of a steamer. Dan held up his hand, and the driver stopped the sweating horses.

' Not much of a crop, Tom ?' said Dan, kicking up a segment of the thin swath with disfavour.

' Sorra crop at all !' said the driver. ' If ye scaddered needles from this to the paikeen north ye'd pick them all afther ! '

He was a short, thick, little man, with a black muzzle and a fat, pasty face ; when he pulled off his cap to Eileen he revealed a head as round as a ball, on which the black hair had been clipped so close that in the strong sunshine the scalp looked blue. A leather

jerkin and an iron morion were all that were needed to transform him into a swashbuckler of the Long Parliament. Though the conquered race had asserted itself within, without he was pure Cromwellian.

‘ Above on the north side of the field ye couldn’t hardly see grass at all, and what’s in it is blooming up through the coltsfoot like pins in a cushion. A man’d have a nice job with a razor to cut as much as three blades o’ grass off it ! ’

Two enormous gadflies swung, boomerang, round the group a couple of times, and then, changing their orbit, banged down upon the chestnut’s quarters. The old horse stood quiet, knowing well he had a protector. Tom McLoughlen, short and stocky though he was, was out of the driving seat, his cap in his hand, in a single jump. With two swift swings of the cap the gadflies were dashed to the ground.

‘ Them dam’ bees have the cattle destroyed ! Running mad they are ! Them two makes six now I killed this morning. Old Markis is as wise as a man. Whatever he’ll be doing he’ll stand still for me until I can get to come at them.’

He ground the bodies of the gadflies into the earth with his heel,

‘ Ah-ha, me lads ! Ye’ll not go to the Fair of Slogher ! ’

He flung the epitaph at the audience with a triumphing eye. Thus might one of his Roundhead ancestors have demanded approval for the slaughter of two Papist cavaliers.

‘ Tom,’ said Dan, ignoring the triumph, ‘ let Mike Regan carry on with the mowing ; I want to talk to you.’

Eileen, who seldom lost a chance of ingratiating

herself with useful people, laughed and said, ‘Good shot, Tom !’

She turned to Dan.

‘I’m going home now. Do try and forget about the cart. It would be so good for father !’

Those that go down to their business in the deep waters of the Irish peasant-people may not, possibly, see much of the works of the Lord, but they will certainly see much that is lovable and laughable, instructive and exasperating. They must themselves possess many equally diverse qualities, among which patience and perception may primarily be exacted. They must have a mind, sensitive as a photographic negative, to catch a flying allusion, and a memory of steel, to appreciate deductions, or prognostications, founded on events that are long past, and were never possessed of any apparent importance. They must also have a tight grasp of their own intentions.

‘Tom,’ began Dan firmly, ‘I’m going to do a lot of things you won’t approve of——’

‘God bless ye, sir,’ replied Tom, reverently lifting his cap. ‘You’re my master, and what you says I must do !’

Brief as his period of authority had been, Dan had already found that this declaration implied an immutable resolve of disobedience.

‘Whether I’m your master or no, I’m my own, and I’m going to farm this place my own way.’

Even as Eileen had done, so did Tom shoot a wary, sideways look at Dan’s face.

‘God send ye luck, sir !’ he responded, non-committally.

‘I’m going to get a steam-tractor.’ Dan tried to make the announcement calmly and without defiance, and failed.

A dispassionate listener might have found himself amused by the attitude of this master, as opposed to that of his servant. And yet, if it were observed and considered in all its aspects, it could scarcely be denied that it had a simplicity that was touching, and that implied a deeply-felt and ancient friendship, such a form of friendship as has existed for many long centuries, and gives a perfectly unconscious contradiction to the many theories of class-hatred.

'It'll do the work of a stable-full of horses,' Dan went on. 'Those old horses we have are played out.'

'It's not my place to contradict, Mr. Dan,' said Tom, meditatively, as one who states an abstract proposition, 'but I'd say them's two as nice horses as any man ever cot by the head ; and I seen horses, and follied horses, since ever I was called Tom !'

'I wonder what they'd be good for after ploughing fifty acres !' said Dan combatively.

'And where would Mr. Dan be asking them to do that ?' asked Tom deferentially.

'Here ; the Big Lawn,' replied Dan stubbornly.

'Great God of Heaven !' Tom again lifted his cap with solemnity. 'Well, Mr. Dan's a rich gentleman, and he's able to do these things, God bless him ! Isn't it grand,' he added, as to the Universe, 'what genthry can do ? Whatever notion'll flip into their head, that's what they must do on the minyute ! Oh Christians ! Gold's nothing at all to them !'

'Tom, you're a fool !' said Dan angrily.

The mowing-machine had stormed round the field and was coming back to the disputants, the sparse, flower-starred grass falling in enforced homage before the long notched blade. Dan was desperately anxious to enlist Tom's interest in the new régime.

'Look at that stuff !' he exclaimed, as the horses,

with low-held heads, tramped nearer. ‘That’s not worth calling hay! Isn’t that proof enough that it’s time to make a fresh start? Upon my soul, Tom, if it weren’t for the gentry you’d all be using wooden ploughs this minute! ’

‘And if we were itself,’ shouted Tom through the roar and whirr, ‘maybe we’d have as good crops and better! ’

Dan walked away, slashing at the nettles that flaunted their tasselled heads and their height in his face, and the docks, with their heavy red seed clusters already nearly ripe for distribution. He said to himself that if their luxuriance proved nothing else, it showed that the land was better than the farmer deserved.

Nowhere does the reformer plough a more lonely furrow, or is the power of precedent more potent, than among the tillers of the soil.

‘Sure they’re like sheep, they must have a lead,’ said the friend and neighbour to whom Dan, worsted in conflict with Tom McLoughlen, had turned for sympathy.

The neighbour, whose name was James Ryan, and whose farm adjourned the lands of Monalour, was a farmer of established prosperity; and, being comfortably aware that he was not as other men were, he felt no need to restrain his gift of large and drastic criticism. ‘But I’ll say this for them,’ he continued magnanimously, ‘if you can once beat a notion into their skulls, I’ll engage ye’ll not knock a stir out o’ them on that tack, good or bad, for forty years! ’

Dan’s dark eyes met the lively green ones of Mr. Ryan in sombre protest, but he said nothing.

‘Bone-idle they are, and stupid to the back o’ that! B’lieve me, Mr. Dan, fashionable farming’s no dam’ good! The money them machines cost, ye’d

turn it over three times buying bullocks before your men had your engine destroyed—and that'd be in something about three weeks !'

Mr. Ryan pulled a half-smoked pipe out of his pocket and relighted it, talking between the loud smacks of his lips needed to restore to it animation, and eyeing Dan attentively over its bowl. 'Sure haven't I been at the game this twenty years, with me father, and without me father ? Don't I know them fellows ! They'd rather do a thing wrong than right ; it'd be a satisfaction to them ! They'd sooner leave a cart closing a gateway than shut the gate, and soonest of all they'd leave nothing at all in it ! Every stray-away on the roads they has their ground before them, and that's *my* ground ! I declare to God I'm half me time running around shutting me gates and driving other men's cattle, the same as the Sinn Feiners themselves !'

'I never knew an Irish farmer yet that had a good word to say for anyone but himself,' said Dan morosely. 'It's—it's heart-breaking !'

Jimmy Ryan, sane, practical, conservative, cunning and good-natured, generous and stingy, regarded his neighbour with an expression in which several of these qualities had their share.

'It's worse than your heart'll be broken !' he said, his little, sharp, green eyes prying into Dan's moody face. 'It's your pocket will be broken, and yourself too—horse, foot, and dragoons ! Let you stick to the ways that your men know——'

'I've ordered a tractor,' growled Dan.

'Well, well——' said Mr. Ryan, and ceased.

As he said to his wife later, in recounting the interview, he saw no use in dirtying a clean cloth sopping up spilt milk.

CHAPTER IV

ON the day following his conversation with his friend, Mr. Dan Palliser, Mr. James Ryan drove at a dashing trot towards that centre of the universe of which he spoke affectionately as ‘Town,’ in order there to join in the deliberations of the Rural District Council, of which, as befitted a man of sense and substance, he was a leading member.

He sat with his thick shoulders humped, sending his horse along without effort, while he revolved in his busy and subtle brain a matter paramount among those that had induced him to leave his new-cut hayfield, and to spend the best part of a fine day in the town of Eskragh.

‘It’d be for the good of the country and for the good of himself—’

His thought developed itself in the ordered swing and poise that is one of the features of the speech of southern Ireland. ‘He’s young, to be sure, but he’ll get the better o’ that, please God ! And if he’s young itself, t’would be better he was too young than too old. The father was too stiff ; too old and too stiff—Well, maybe the Devil has him soopled by now ! ’

Jimmy flicked his horse’s fat quarters, pleased with his anticipation of the improvement that had possibly been effected in Colonel Palliser.

The stout bay horse stepped out, rounding a sharp turn at a pace that came near causing disaster to him and his owner, since it all but ran him into another

trap that was, like Mr. Ryan's, on the wrong side of the road.

'The Baby ! By Gosh !' exclaimed Jimmy to himself, dragging his horse to a stand just in time to escape collision. 'How are ye, Mr. Coyne ?' he called out. 'I was near running ye down !'

'Well, James, if ye'd done that ye'd have been hard set to pick me up again, as big as you are !' returned Mr. Coyne, who had achieved a degree of obesity so excessive that he felt justified in boasting of the greatness that had been thrust upon him.

'Going to the Board, Mr. Coyne ?'

'I am, James, I am. We've got to co-opt one of the Jah-Pays' (thus did Mr. Coyne facetiously allude to the Magistracy) 'in place of poor old Dowling. Ah ! I had a great wish for Dowling always. He had a heart as big as a bucket !'

'He had so, Mr. Coyne, and always as full of good whisky as it'd hold !' replied Jimmy, drawing level with the other trap, and shooting a quick and investigating glance at its driver's face.

In its way Mr. Coyne's face was a remarkable one, and in some degree accounted for the nickname by which Jimmy, like the rest of his world, thought of him.

A legend obtained in the town of Eskragh that, some seventy years ago, a young priest of a sporting turn borrowed a rifle and went forth to practise shooting at a mark. A bullet missed the target and crashed through the window of a neighbouring public-house. The prospective mother of Mr. Nicholas Coyne was seated behind the counter, and the bullet, passing near her head, finished its career in a bottle of whisky, whose contents precipitated themselves in appropriate, if premature, chrism upon Mrs. Coyne. She, being a

lady of refinement, and well instructed in the rules that govern the reception of shocks, immediately experienced a succession of 'wakenesses' the ultimate result of which was the expedited arrival of Nicholas. Even at the age of seventy, the title of Baby Bullet, which, with a child-like effort of humour, had been conferred on him by the wits of Eskragh, was still his; and, as though Nature had determined it should not be forgotten, he had never lost the pink and pulpy dewiness, the moisture and the thirstiness of mouth, and the goggling malevolence of eye, of extreme infancy. His small features were embedded in and encircled by undulating rolls of pink fat; his little hands had the pudgy shapelessness of those of a baby.

Outwardly though Baby Bullet might justify his pet name, it was singularly inapplicable when his mental outfit was considered, but this fact lent a certain piquancy that endeared him to his acquaintances, and imparted the agreeable illusion that they were humorists, when they spoke of him by his courtesy title.

'I thought it hard to leave my hay to-day and it so fine,' said Jimmy Ryan, restraining the bay horse's pace to that of the Baby's somnolent grey mare, 'but I missed the last Board—'

'You did, boy, you did,' said Baby Bullet indulgently, 'and who are ye coming to vote for to-day?'

'Well, now, Mr. Coyne,' said Jimmy, with a well-simulated burst of candour, 'I'm glad to me heart I met ye this way. It wasn't but three days back I said to me wife, I *should* go see ye, but the time failed me.'

'Well, well, James, ye have me now,' replied Mr. Coyne kindly, 'and the dear knows I can't get away from ye, even if I wanted to!' He emphasised his

remark with a purely ritual slash of the whip, which was received by the grey mare in the spirit in which it was offered.

'I was thinking,' began Jimmy again, 'that young Dan Palliser would be a useful sort of chap upon the Board. The father got him made a Jah-Pay, not very long before he died, and, upon me soul, I think we might get worse than him!'

'Very true, James, very true,' assented the Baby wheezily.

'I know there's plenty on the Board that might say we didn't want his sort at all,' went on Jimmy cautiously, 'but sure *I* say why wouldn't we come out plucky and say we're not afraid of a gentleman?'

Baby Bullet opened his mouth—or, to be more accurate, he enlarged the aperture that always stood open in his face—as if to speak, but was seized with a violent fit of coughing.

'I've got a cough that'd split a stone!' he remarked, when utterance was restored. 'It's playing on me now since the first time I got the 'fluenzy—'93, I b'lieve it was—or was it '91? I d'no—it and the asthma together.'

'That's a long time since,' responded Jimmy politely, well aware that Mr. Coyne was marking time while he collected his thoughts. 'But see here, Mr. Coyne, wouldn't you say a good word for Mr. Palliser? There's plenty ways he might come in useful——' He paused and tried to catch the Baby's eye.

'James,' said Baby Bullet impressively, in a high, slow, pompous, and wheezy tenor that, did a turbot possess the gift of speech, would seem to be the voice suitable to its face and figure, 'I've known you, boy and man, going on thirty-five years. I had a wish

for you always and ever, and for your father before you. Yee were always decent, civil, and obliging——’ The eulogium which was being delivered in tones of tomb-stone gravity was interrupted by another attack of the cough that would split stones. ‘ There is no man, James, in this barony, that I would sooner compliment than yourself. But, James, I must remember my principles ! ’ The flat, glistening eyes goggled round upon Jimmy for a moment, and Jimmy uttered an appropriate grunt.

‘ There was a woman came to me a while ago,’ resumed the Baby, ‘ asking me would I get her a job—washing-a-day-a-week at the Union, I think it was. I said to her, “ My good woman,” I says, “ I might consider it, but I must have something for it.” “ Sir,” says she, “ I’m a poor woman, what could I give ye ? ” “ Mary Bryan,” says I (that was her name), “ Mary,” says I, “ if it was only half a crown, I should have it. For the *principle* of the thing, Mary,” says I.’

Mr. Coyne again paused, and his spherical countenance rolled on his shoulders towards his fellow-councillor. ‘ You know, James, that a half a crown, here or there, would be, as I might say, a matter of no considerable importance to me, but it was the principle I had to regard. It was I introduced this method of obtaining votes into this Union, and I may say, James, I may say, it has worked exceedingly well ! ’

‘ The devil doubt ye it has ! ’ thought Jimmy, ‘ ye blasted old rip ! ’ but he said aloud, with all politeness, ‘ Well, Mr. Coyne, if your vote’s promised, I’m only sorry I troubled ye at all ! ’

‘ No harm, Jamesy-boy. No offence meant and none taken,’ returned Mr. Coyne benignly. ‘ It was merely my intention to point out to ye that everything,

big and small, has its market value ; and that, in itself, James, is a varriable matter that depends upon the individualitee of th' individual !'

The Baby here emitted a few asthmatic squeaks, indicating his belief that he had made if not a joke, an epigram. 'Now if young Mr. Palliser of Monalour wanted something, he should pay more for it than poor Mary Bryan, or even than Mr. James Ryan himself !' and again his sense of humour overcame Baby Bullet.

Upon Mr. James Ryan's intelligent countenance an expression had suddenly appeared that suggested the thrilled self-restraint of the terrier who has seen for an instant the snout of the rat at the mouth of the hole which he is watching. 'He's in the market still !' he thought, and thought fast. 'What is it he's out for ? He knows he'll get no money out o' Dan. Be gannies, I have it !'

'Well, that's right enough, Mr. Coyne,' he said, joining in the Baby's innocent mirth, 'and when I want a job o' washing at the House, I'll give ye more than half a crown for it ! Even if it wasn't to be a cash payment itself, there's more ways of killing a dog than hanging him !'

Jimmy fell silent for a few moments ; then he, as it were, broached a fresh tap. 'I heard some talk of the coal contracts being given out soon,' he observed. 'Will there be many tendering for it, d'ye think ?'

'Why, then, I might be thinking about it meself,' said Mr. Coyne lightly. 'They put Monaghan's tender before mine last year, and I think they were sorry enough afther ! I declare to ye, James, if I was to sell you the like o' that coal Monaghan had—and it no more than a shilling below mine—ye'd be pelting it at me !'

Jimmy did not wait to discuss his adoption of this

method of remonstrating with his coal merchant ; he looked straight in front of him at his horse's ears and said :

' I think they'll vote on the tenders next time.'

' I'm told so,' said Mr. Coyne.

' Monaghan came to me about the same coal,' went on Jimmy carelessly. ' I made him no promise. He has plenty friends. If it came to a vote it'd be pretty tight between him and yourself, Mr. Coyne ! '

' Ah, it mightn't be worth my while to put in for it at all,' said the Baby with equal carelessness.

The matter dropped. They were going up hill, and Jimmy put his reins over his arm and lit a pipe. The Baby seemed to dream in the morning sunshine. He turned drowsily to Jimmy.

' Young Mr. Palliser's a fine young man,' he mused. ' A fine, upright young man, no doubt, but he is entoyherly without experience. No knowledge of practical matters, such, James, as is regarded in our deliberations.'

' I'll make ye one promise,' said Jimmy boldly. ' If he's co-opted a member of the Board, he'll take my opinion about the quality o' coal ! '

' Well, that'd be no more than was reasonable in an ignorant young man,' said the Baby, with condescension. ' I'll think it over, James.'

' I've got him ! ' thought Jimmy, ' and I got him cheap ! Please God I'll manyouver me bold Danny now all right ! '

He said aloud, ' Leave it with me entirely, Mr. Coyne. Never fear I'll be answerable for making it right.'

They had come to a cross-roads, and were there joined by an old friend of Mr. Coyne's, driving an

identical trap and an almost identical old grey mare. Conversation on the usual topics, the weather, the hay-crop, and the latest political outrages, began briskly. As soon as no suspicion of brusqueness could attach itself to his departure, Jimmy gave the bay horse his head. The bay horse, whose name was Trooper, and on whose shoulder was the Government broad arrow, availed himself of this privilege with enthusiasm. His present master, big as he was, was not as heavy as the guns whose weight Trooper well remembered, and the hilly road, composed though it was of rough, broken stones, and holes filled with dust, was an improvement upon the sloughs of Flanders.

Jimmy drove fast, with a loose rein, up and down hill alike, the 'ramblers,' as he would have called the scattered stones, spraying right and left of the big horse's big feet. The road ran, or, to speak more truly, crawled over a high pass in the hills. As it went upwards the surface improved ; the arable fields died away into great tracts of heather, and of that particular variety of bog that looks as though it would make sound and dry walking, but is a mere skin of turf and heather, covering a shallow yet everlasting heart of water. Trooper's thumping trot declined to a jog, then to a walk of the ineffable slowness special to what Mr. Ryan spoke of as 'farming-horses.' All round lay the moorland, in successive waves of colour ; from bright green in the wettest places, where the new summer grass came pricking through the heather, through brown, and grey, and purple, until, faintly over the hills of the middle distance, a high, transparent hint of amethyst told of far-off mountains, matters too lofty for the scope of this little, patient, toiling road. Scattered groups of hill-sheep kept the look of life in

the bare country ; pale, shaggy donkeys, attended by their children, balls of beaver-brown fur, with faces of wondering innocence, and feet like reels of black cotton, bundled out of the road on which they were lying, with a speed that spoke of many a wanton slash of a passing whip. Jimmy Ryan took note of none of these things, save when a little bunch of sheep scurried across the road, and he asked himself what way it was in the world these sheep had of blowing themselves out, by the dint of wind and water, till they'd humbug a butcher into thinking he'd get a quarter of a pound of chops off their carcase ?

Jimmy was deeply considering the case of his friend, Dan Palliser. Difference in breeding, in religion, in age, affected not his faithful regard for the boy who had grown up beside him and was his landlord's son. 'A good boy he is,' thought Jimmy, 'and not as much roguery in him as 'd blind your eye. It's all that's wanting to him !'

It certainly was regrettable, but Mr. Ryan determined, with generous zeal, that he would himself supply the tact and social skill which were the qualities that he summarised as roguery. Subtlety, knowledge of his world, and how to take it, these gifts were Jimmy's, as indeed they were those of very many of his fellows, and he valued them as a man values the trusty weapons that he has tried often and not known to fail. Those other qualities that were also his, industry, generosity, fidelity to his friends, and, above all, the gallant Irish light-heartedness that will take a risk and give a chance, were aspects of his soul of which he was entirely unconscious. Had his attention been drawn to them he would have regarded them as weaknesses, or, more probably, he would have disclaimed

them. In Jimmy Ryan's world a man may be praised for his straightness in money dealings, his hospitality, his charity to the poor, his neighbourliness (which last are indeed virtues that are lacking in but few of his class), but it is for other than these things that he is feared, which is after all a very high form of respect.

It happened that Mr. Ryan held, at this particular epoch, a lever of some power in the manipulation of public opinion. The barony of which Eskragh was the chief town was a hunter-breeding district, and Jimmy's stallion, Wild Minstrel, was of a distinction that made it worth the while of any breeder of 'quality horses' to stand well with his owner. Labyrinthine and tortuous are ever the intrigues in a small Irish town in connection with an election even as unimportant as that in which Jimmy was now operating. It is not proposed to follow him. Let it suffice to say that a diplomacy such as would not have been unworthy of an international crisis met with its well-earned reward, and Jimmy Ryan's nominee was co-opted a member of the Rural District Council of Eskragh.

CHAPTER V

IF it is sometimes from among the lowest of the people that stones are thrown at those above them, it is at least as often from the upper rungs of the ladder that denunciations descend, and fall the more heavily since they come from a height. Arnold, first Baron Ducarrig, and Jimmy Ryan, from their different rungs, viewed their world in a very similar spirit. Neither of them was in the habit of looking upwards, and therefore it is obvious that all that they saw was below them.

The best part of a lifetime spent in Ruling the Roast, in climates where the term might as fitly be applied to the Governor himself as to that which he ruled, does not tend to develop either tolerance or that gift of which tolerance is an outcome, the imagination that bestows sympathy, and enables a man to put himself in his neighbour's place. Lord Ducarrig seldom cared for his neighbours, and since for many years he had been accustomed to rule over them, he had made no effort to cultivate a gift that might, even in imagination, involve him in changing places with any of them. Thus, usefully armed with a habit of dislike and contempt, he returned to his native land well equipped to hold his own in the competitive denunciation of Ireland that is the life and soul of so many of its social gatherings. At the epoch now being treated of, it is possible that, were two or three Irish men or women of any class gathered together, they might, by an

effort, have refrained from abandoning themselves to indignant lamentations over the conduct of all sections of the community save their own ; but that they should thus have refrained is improbable, and it may confidently be asserted that if Mrs. Palliser and Lord Ducarrig had been of the party, no clause of the Combination Service would have been omitted. Lord Ducarrig's heavy-jowled, well-cut, eighteenth-century face, that would have been handsome but for its little eyes like a pig's, pale-lashed and pink, would glow with what he felt to be a patriot zeal, when Ireland, her climate, her people, and her politics, were placed on the block for execution ; and Mrs. Palliser, at one of the small dinner-parties that were a feature of the new régime at Monalour House, went so far as to extol Charlotte Corday's methods, and (being annoyed, as she said afterwards, by Katie de Vere) she had even declared that she would consider herself as performing a public benefit were she to slay one of the Sinn Fein leaders in his bath.

' Only, my dear,' flung in Katie de Vere, ' you wouldn't have the chance, as they never take baths ! '

Katie de Vere had never been known to sacrifice a jest to a friend (though she had frequently reversed the process), and she could not, therefore, be expected to spare her enemies.

Miss de Vere was a plain and elderly cousin of the late Colonel Palliser, and was regarded by his widow as a messenger of Satan, sent to buffet her. Katie de Vere, so Mrs. Palliser was accustomed to say, treated all subjects alike with levity, and her efforts to attract attention should be ignored by all right-thinking persons. Mrs. Palliser, herself, did not invariably observe this method, but on this occasion she succeeded

in continuing her indictment of her country and its people, with scarcely a stagger.

'The same thing runs through everything and every class' she asserted, having given that cautious circular glance, to make certain of the absence of the servants, that is, in Ireland, almost automatic, '*Unreliability!*' She planted her large hand, with its gouty knuckles and finger-joints, flat on the table, as if she were laying the foundation-stone of a public building. 'You *can't* trust them! Idle, unconscientious, and dirty! They don't *know* what cleanliness is! I have never yet met with an Irish servant who *suffered* from dirt, as a good English servant does—'

'A sort of illness, Georgina? Like dust-fever?' Miss de Vere's penetrating voice broke into the arraignment. 'Is it catching?'

'Katie,' said Mrs. Palliser repressively, 'you need not pretend to misunderstand me because you are unable to contradict me!'

Satisfaction at her retort took away Mrs. Palliser's breath for a moment, but she continued to hum and to champ her haggard jaws, as an indication that, though thrown out of her stride, she retained control of the conversation.

'Even in my old home in the North,' she resumed, 'I can *not* say that the general standard approached the English—'

'I am so bored by standards!' struck in Miss de Vere, who very much preferred her own voice to anyone else's, and possessed a conquering turn of speed that had been denied to Mrs. Palliser. 'One doesn't want standards in the kitchen—though I admit I have flags in mine! That's a joke, Georgina, please laugh!' She collected the eyes of her fellow guests with a swift

look round the table. ‘ I always warn Northerners when these things happen ! ’ she declared, and hurried on, ‘ Give me Ireland ! The intolerable nuisance of housekeeping is in some degree mitigated by the charms of conversation with your cook—I *could* tell you twenty stories, but I’ll spare you now ! ’

‘ Not suitable for publication ? ’ suggested her host, with the creaky cough that served him for a laugh. ‘ Have another glass of port, Miss de Vere, and try again ! ’

‘ They wouldn’t do *you* much harm ! ’ returned Miss de Vere dauntlessly. ‘ I won’t waste them on unsympathetic people ! All I want to establish is that Irish servants have the great merit of being amusing, which *I* put far above cleanliness ! ’

‘ I don’t go to my kitchen for amusement,’ said Mrs. Palliser, charging again into the fray. ‘ You, Katie, try to turn everything into fun ! I can see nothing funny in what I can only call national degeneracy ! ’

‘ I’m sure you can’t, my dear,’ returned Miss de Vere, who combined the temperaments of orator and matador, and fought and talked the better for an audience that she could irritate and scandalise ; ‘ but there’s so much in a name. Take Sinn Fein, for instance. *I* consider “Ourselves Alone” is a most praiseworthy sentiment, but I suppose Lord Ducarrig will give it quite another label ! ’

‘ *I* call it rank rebellion ! ’ said Ducarrig, with an ugly look at the intrepid Miss de Vere. ‘ I’d like to send a fleet of aeroplanes to bomb Ireland from Slyne Head to Cape Clear ! ’

‘ Like rain to fall on the just and the unjust—even on Belfast ? ’ jeered Katie de Vere, whose political

opinions had a single rallying-point, which was opposition to those of the company she was in.

'Or there's the good old recipe—twenty-four hours under water!' threw in, with all sincerity, another of the company, an old general, with a heavy white moustache.

Ducarrig emptied his glass. 'No! under blood!' he said violently, refilling the glass as he spoke.

Lady Ducarrig leaned back in her chair. She found herself much bored. Mrs. Palliser's was the eye necessary to catch in order to effect escape, and it, bright with battle, was fixed upon Miss de Vere, who had now taken a daring stand under the banner of Sinn Fein, and was enjoying herself very much.

'Will it end quietly?' Car murmured to Dan, who was beside her, 'or will there be bloodshed? I'm not used to so much enthusiasm. It was too hot at Santa Caterina. You cried, or fainted, if you were contradicted, and there it ended.'

'People always fight here,' said Dan, looking blackly at his cousin, Miss de Vere. He wished that his mother had not played up to Katie's egregious trailing of her coat. Katie was a regular old devil, always out for a row. She didn't care what rot she talked as long as she could put some one in a rage. 'They'll always fight about Ireland, any way,' he added. 'Everybody does.'

Admiral Caulfield, on Car's other hand, found himself exhilarated by the contest, much as a canary reacts to the voice of the piano.

'This last news from Ulster is pretty lively, Ducarrig!' he called loudly down the table. 'There's been another blow-up, and a lot of the other side killed!'

'Thank God!' said Lord Ducarrig, with a gleam in his white-lashed eyes, that were like a pig's eyes. His large, well-shaped head, hairless, save for a thin reddish fringe, that hung like a garland from ear to ear across the back of his scalp, was darkly pink all over. He sat low. Dan thought of the rising harvest moon, and discarded the thought, with apologies to the moon.

Mrs. Palliser, through her conflict with Miss de Vere, caught the word 'Ulster.'

'What's that? What's that, Dick?' she cried.
'Who were killed?'

Eileen Caulfield had gone in to dinner with Dan; she turned to him.

'If your mother and my father begin to talk about Ulster, we're done for!' she whispered.

'I know that as well as you do!' Dan muttered, his head down, his long back hooped. 'I can't stand much more of it!'

'Don't fight them, they're too idiotic!' Eileen murmured back. 'They're not worth powder and shot!'

Car Ducarrig, lazy in manner though she might be, was swift in action. Mrs. Palliser had looked for information to her brother, the Admiral, and in that fatal moment her eye was intercepted and held by her hostess, as a wasp may be checked in flight and swept into a butterfly net. The rustle of departure, the picking up of handkerchiefs and gloves followed in due course; the door closed upon Eileen's slim blue back, and Lady Ducarrig's darkly gorgeous gold one, and Dan was left, defenceless among his warlike elders.

There is something incongruous, even indecent, in the excessive ardour for slaughter that is often dis-

played by men who are past the age of fighting with any member more efficient than their tongues. Dan, who had fought through four years of war, sat in silence, his eyes on his plate, the only man of peace among these dinner-table warriors, and tried not to listen to what they said, and wondered how much longer he would have to bear it. Then he thought of his father, and wondered if his spirit were here, in his own old dining-room, and, if so, if he sympathised with the triumphing anticipation of civil war, and martial law, of the red-faced man who sat in his chair, at his table. Dan admitted to himself (being the victim of an honesty so uncompromising that he could not even deceive himself) that when his father had been there he had been as loud in denunciation as any of them ; but it was possible his opinions had changed. That is to say if he were himself still, or were anywhere, and knew anything—— What was the Admiral holloaing about now ?

‘ I’ve told my boy in the Gunners that if he’s sent to Ulster, I only hope—— ’

Dan looked at the portrait of one of his ancestors of four generations back, Henry Palliser ; it hung on the wall just behind Uncle Dick’s well-clipped, crinkled-silver head. Great—several greats—Grandfather Henry had lived in the days of duelling ; he had quarrelled with a neighbour, and his son and the neighbour’s son had been commanded to honour their fathers by fighting their battles for them, so that the promise that their days should be long in the land might be fulfilled, if not for the sons, for the fathers. Dan knew the story well. The young men were close and dear friends, but that had not been permitted to interfere with the satisfaction required by their fathers.

The fight took place on a long bridge, and all the country was there to see the fun. ‘I’ve always been told it was like a fair, with crackers and crubeens and tents !’ his father used to say, laughing. The combatants had resolved to fire in the air, but young Dan Palliser’s hand shook, and he pulled the trigger too soon, and killed his friend, James Kennedy. Dan went over the story again—anything to close his ears. ‘I’d have shot myself next !’ he thought.

‘Dan, did you ever hear what Matthew Hannigan’s Aunt said ?’ demanded Uncle Dick, aggressively cheery (‘slightly sprung’ Dan thought). ““Arrah, man ! Don’t stop the coarse of the can ! How d’ye know but your neighbour’s dhry ?””

The Admiral’s stage-Irish brogue was almost harder to bear than his blood-thirstiness. Dan sent the wine onward with a shove that set the glasses jingling.

His uncle, temporarily diverted from the theme of politics, was now embarking upon one of his longer stories, stories that, though long, were not as long as they were broad. In a pause, the result of the narrator’s being too convulsed with merriment at his history to proceed, the sound, far and faint, of the piano came through the open window.

That old and recognised cry for help can seldom have met with more instant response. Dan was on his feet as the first notes stole through the Venetian blinds into the hot and noisy room.

‘I think I hear music,’ he said, looking to his host for permission.

In the drawing-room he found that the music which had given him his excuse had ceased. Monalour was an old-fashioned house in which was not electric light ; the lamps had not yet been brought in, and the

long room was lit only by the depressed daylight that lingers, aware of its own unsuitability, after a summer-time dinner. The drawing-room consisted of two rooms, with a very wide archway between them. The tall French window at the end of the farther room was open, and silhouetted against its greyness, Dan saw Lady Ducarrig sitting at the piano, her back to the keyboard, talking to Eileen. A fire of turf and logs, a matter more of ornament than of necessity, provided a gathering point for Mrs. Palliser, Mrs. Caulfield, and Miss de Vere, who were still talking politics with an excitement in no degree inferior to that of the party in the dining-room.

'Your cousin wants me to sing,' Lady Ducarrig said to Dan, in a low voice, 'but I'm so afraid of interfering with the conversation.'

She eyed the discoursing dowagers, appraising their enjoyment and engrossment, and looked back, smiling, to Dan and Eileen.

Eileen laughed, and said, 'Nothing could do that, short of burning down the house!'

Dan said nothing. He thought, 'If I don't like her singing, I shall be in a hole. I'm a bad liar.'

Even though abstract enthusiasms could sweep him off his feet, he was slow in some things—slow in realising character, very slow, by reason of theoretical austerity, in deciding on his likes and dislikes, and, nevertheless, an indifferent judge of character, being of the breed that believes its own honesty is common to all men, and that sees that which it wishes to see. As to Lady Ducarrig, he couldn't feel sure she wasn't too good-looking to be as good as she looked. And her singing—in the matter of music he had no hesitations, being a classicist as deep as he was narrow—he

told himself it would inevitably be too opulent for his fancy.

Eileen, with a quiet eye on Dan, had not ceased to agitate for music. She divined Dan's feeling, because she shared his views as to the probable 'opulence' of Lady Ducarrig's voice and taste; but she considered that this might, in certain contingencies, prove an auxiliary not to be despised.

Car Ducarrig's grey eyes moved tranquilly from the face of one cousin to that of the other. The situation was obscure enough to be amusing. Why was the girl so keen? She was a bit of a fraud, of course, but that didn't quite explain. She had expatiated on her own ignorance of music, on her cousin's love for it, on his remarkable fastidiousness. Miss Eileen, Car thought, protested too much. Her dazzling complexion, and her curly, golden hair, and her civilities, were all a little excessive. He was annoying, too; so sallow and sombre and silent. He might at least pretend a little interest in her singing. His silence was becoming an offence to her. He seemed to have quite forgotten that link of friendship, the scullery drain—to have forgotten even that she had bestowed on him the honour of knighthood! She felt suddenly angry, and determined to make him look foolish.

'Well, Sir Daniel?' she said, regarding him from under her eyelashes.

Sir Daniel incontinently turned a dark and painful red.

'Oh, please sing,' he said hurriedly, 'I hope you will—'

He looked foolish enough to satisfy her, and Miss Caulfield's evident mystification was pleasing too.

She turned to the piano, saying to herself that it amused her to sing, and therefore she would do so whether either of them liked it or no.

'No, thanks, I don't want lights,' she said, 'nor books—my music's in my head—'

(Sir Daniel shuddered secretly, and wondered from which of the latest revues they were going to be favoured with extracts; with improvised accompaniments, of course.)

It would seem that there can be no absolute ideal in music; less even than in any of the other arts. It is higher than they are, a purer wind of the spirit, and blows where it listeth, leaving some ships becalmed, unmoved; filling other sails, so that the vessel is carried near paradise. Who can tell whence the wind of music blows, or predict who shall be stirred by it? Yet it may perhaps be said that these airs from another world find here and there, an æolian harp through which to sing their message, some interpreter in whose voice the ecstasy, and the mystery, and the pain mingle and vibrate.

Car Ducarrig had many friends, and scarcely two of them could agree which of the many facets of her soul had the special charm for them, and held the quality that made them love her. But a few there were who knew how it was that they had first been overthrown; who had struggled, perhaps, against the traitor in the garrison of their souls, and struggled in vain. For them there had been no gainsaying the throb of that deep and secret nerve that had forced them, helplessly, to yield themselves to her possessing voice.

Dan Palliser was of those whose opinions, once formed, were of disastrous tenacity—disastrous because

his strong will held them with a force that limited their power of growth. He was of the fiery company of enthusiasts. He created popes in music, in poetry, in politics, and in friendship, and, endowing them with infallibility, he then, as was no more than orthodox, worshipped them and believed in them and them only. Long since he had created his musical hierarchy, and now Fate, who, whether by forethought or chance, makes so often a mess of things, had arranged that the first song that he was to hear, sung by the magnetic, heart-shaking voice of Car Ducarrig, was one of those best known to him, and best beloved ; one of the songs of the master who was head pontiff in Dan's hierarchy.

CHAPTER VI

BREAKFAST was in progress in the sunny dining-room of the Lake House. On the floor by the open doors into the garden were Peggy, the cocker spaniel, fat and black, and Lizzie, the fox-terrier, small and misanthropic, with sore eyes and a bitter smile; a low-spirited yet indomitable little dog, who beyond the single stern passion that she cherished for Dan, hated human beings only a degree less than she loathed her fellows. She was now seated erect in the open doorway, with a stately little head held high, blinking broodingly at the sunlit garden in a sort of trance of hatred of all things earthly, and shaken occasionally by strong shudders, which possibly meant that she had thought of a rabbit. Peggy, on the other hand, looking like a large Astrakhan pillow, was watching, with an intentness that betrayed her inward agony of gluttony, the passage of each morsel of food from Dan's plate to his mouth. Peggy had belonged to Colonel Palliser, and since his death had fallen into somnolent widowhood and an *ennui* only mitigated by meals.

Dan and his mother faced each other at either end of the table. Midway between them was Eileen Caulfield. Eileen was there because her aunt desired her assistance at the school feast that was a yearly feature of the time of strawberries, and was to occur that day. It cannot be said that Mrs. Palliser approved of her niece, since she disapproved of all young

people, and especially of young women, but she had decided that Eileen, and the £10,000 that Dick had hinted he was going to give her, would make as good a match for Dan as she was likely to find. She told herself that, after all, as poor Henry used to say, the devil you know is better than the devil you don't know. The relationship was a drawback, of course ; but she knew, almost it may be said that she hoped, there was always a drawback to everything. As to Eileen and Dan, their opinions had not, so far, been consulted. Mrs. Palliser, Ulster woman though she was, was all South in the matter of arranged matrimony.

Eileen had finished her breakfast, but her aunt, whose digestion was one of her few weak points, was still champing torrified bread—a process that equally to Eileen's ears and eyes suggested the eating of his oats by a horse. Mrs. Palliser was a prey to what she believed to be medical inspirations, and submitted herself to their rigours as unflinchingly as she imposed them on her dependents. Her letters lay by her plate, unopened ; it was one of her rules not to open them until she had read prayers.

Dan ate his food silently, and with almost meticulous neatness. He was like his mother in his lack of any touch of the human, often endearing quality of greediness, but quite unlike her in her hasty, slovenly methods of consumption.

Eileen took stock of them both ; endlessly weighing, dissecting, criticising, as was her habit.

'Singularly unattractive, certainly, Aunt Gina is !' she reflected. ' Hideous she's made herself with that catafalque of a cap ! And she might be good-looking —almost ! I wish Dan weren't like her—no, he's not, not really—he's just got her best points, that's all——'

Here Mrs. Palliser champed her last piece of toast, sent her last mouthful of tea hard on its heels, and stood up.

'Ready, children? Now! Prayers! Oh, you've not finished, Dan?' She strode round to her son's side, and before he had realised her intention dropped a tabloid into his cup. 'You're going to Eskragh to-day, and I hear it's full of influenza. This is a sure preventive.'

She waited for no reply, and left the room with her quick, heavy step.

Dan waited till he heard her ringing the bell that summoned the household to prayers, then he leaned sideways towards the open window, and picking up his cup he flung its contents into a perfume-breathing patch of mignonette.

Eileen's long blue eyes were full of admiration, but before she could express it, Mrs. Palliser returned.

'Well, have you taken it?'

'Yes, Mother,' replied Dan unhesitatingly.

He rose from his seat. 'I'm sorry I've got to get away early, I can't wait for prayers——'

The long blue eyes, still dancing with amusement and approval, tried in vain to meet his. He lifted the wallowing Peggy gently to one side with his big foot and went out through the French window, followed by Lizzie, limping parsimoniously on three legs.

His mother looked after him grimly, but said nothing. She enjoyed reading prayers and liked a full house.

Eileen said to herself that Dan was often splendid. It was not so much that she admired the lie, as the intractable mood that had evoked it.

It was a fortnight since Dan had found himself a

member of the Rural District Council of Eskragh, and this was his second appearance at its deliberations.

'Ah, ye'll soon feel your feet under ye,' Jimmy Ryan told him, regarding him with godfatherly pride, 'and when ye do, don't be kicking us all too hard with them ! Take the fellows easy, for a while, any way !'

Jimmy loved and admired his *protégé*, but distrusted his reforming tendencies. Dan had been intensely gratified by his election, and touched by Jimmy Ryan's elation over his success.

'I don't believe there's another gentleman in the county would have got in, only yourself ! And I declare to God the old Baby proved very good ! Himself and his crowd voted for you straight. The old Baby told me you were a fine, intelligent young man ! See that now !' But Jimmy thought it unnecessary to go deeper into the reasons that had enlisted Mr. Coyne's support. He trusted with a confidence, justified by the success of past manipulations, to others in the future that should enable him to redeem his pledge to Baby Bullet.

Dan had not considered it incumbent on him to tell his mother that the reason of his early start had been his intention to call upon Father Hugh Macnamara before the hour at which the Rural District Council Board Meeting began.

Father Hugh was a young priest who had but recently come to Eskragh. Dan had met him scarcely half a dozen times, and the actual length of their acquaintance might almost have been reckoned in minutes, yet in those minutes they had mutually realised a link of spirit : almost (which is a rarer thing) a similar outlook upon the very distracted world in which they both found themselves.

Dan's motor bicycle had hardly uttered its final pant at Father Hugh's doorstep before the door opened and the priest himself welcomed his visitor. He led the way through the house to the narrow strip of garden behind it.

'The day is so fine,' he said apologetically, "'tis pleasanter here than inside.'

He was a small slight man, with a pale face, and pale brown hair, and pale blue, short-sighted eyes. He had a nervous manner, and a voice that was unable to keep the secret that the County Dublin could claim him for her own. It would be hard to find a being more unlike Dan Palliser. Nevertheless, the moment for the link of soul to assert itself had arrived, as such moments will when it is so decreed, however improbable the alliance to be effected, and, on its arrival, Dan and Father Hugh had taken but a short time to discover that in treating of what they both considered to be essential matters, their souls spoke the same language.

The priest's house was on the outer edge of the town. The ground fell away steeply from the end of its narrow garden, and a valley, as fair and fertile as any in the world, lay outspread before Father Hugh and his visitor. The morning was young yet ; the Vale of Esker showed mistily in the faint and elegant tints of an old-fashioned water-colour, with transparent blues, and fairy greens, and airy mauves ; with, here and there, white dots among small dark patches, where farmhouses stood, half hidden among their trees, and, here and there, larger grey patches, that told of villages, lying low by the twining, shining curves of the Esker, the river that went midway down the valley, with the hills on which the town was set on its southern side, and on the other, twenty or more miles away from where the

priest and Dan were standing, a dim margin of mountains, tossing in cool, blue waves from west to east.

The two young men sat silent, looking away down the valley, absorbed in the beauty that lay before them ; priest and visionary, layman and fighter, alike and yet different ; alike in their ardour and their dreams, yet as widely apart in their upbringing and their beliefs, as were the western from the eastern bounds of the valley below them.

' I see sunsets here,' began the priest suddenly, and stopped and sighed. ' Such beauty ! Oh, my God ! Mr. Palliser, I've stood here and looked down that valley, and thought I was looking into heaven ! And then I've waited, and watched the sky darkening down into night, and I've almost wished I could die before the morning, so that I might never know of the deeds of darkness the night might bring forth ! '

Dan was listening intently, leaning back on the garden seat, with his brows lowered over his eyes, and his legs stretched out in front of him, but as the priest's voice died on the end of his sentence, he sat up.

' Quite true,' he said on the muffled bass note that his voice dropped to when he was conscious of an access of emotion that he could not repress, yet was ashamed of showing ; ' but after that the sun rises, you know, and you'd be sorry not to be there ! '

' Yes,' said the priest ; ' and it rises on smoking police barracks and Irishmen murdered by their brothers.'

' It won't go on,' said Dan, frowning, ' an end must come—'

' But what is going to bring the end ? What is to stop this work ? I lie awake at night thinking what can I do, what can I say to the people ? '

Dan stood up with his hands in his pockets, and stared, unseeingly, down at the thin, soft brown hair on Father Hugh's small head. All the training of his life, all the influence of the Northern blood that was in him, had been towards the strangling of sentiment, the closing of every vent through which his views might escape. He had always banked down his fires, and no one suspected their intensity. He was that potent, unpredictable force, an idealist who is also a man of action, and—whether for his misfortune or his glory, who shall say?—his romance, his passion, was Ireland.

Now, as he listened to the priest's confession of failure, some of the long thoughts that had smouldered in him during nights and days in France and Palestine, and during weary weeks in hospital, broke from their restraint.

'What can you say to them?' he said hotly.
'There's plenty to say to them! Good God! If I began to try and tell you what I'd say to them I should be talking for a year!'

He swung round from Father Hugh, and looked away over the valley to the hills.

In no country in the world are ideals as many, as elusive, and as remote from actuality, as in Ireland. Her lamentations and cries for a deliverer do not cease, yet the answering voices cry in vain in a wilderness of thorns, and briars, and cross-purposes, and crosser people. She stones her prophets; her old men dream dreams, and her young men see visions, but the dreams die in despair, and, as Daphne fled from her pursuer and faded into a laurel tree, so do the visions fly and fade, and the dreamer snatching at his dream finds only—since this is not Greece, but Ireland—that he is straining a furze bush to his bosom, and that its thorns

are the sole crown he has won for the Distressful Country.

Dan Palliser, though he knew it not, was in the succession of the martyrs. It is the common lot of the idealist who tries to live his ideals, but Dan was still young enough and strong enough to have faith in the future, and, on this bright morning, confident enough in the comprehending sympathy of the young priest to try to put his faith into words.

'Prosperity is what will bring peace!' he declared. 'And education! To knock the riches that are in it out of the land—to teach the children to look ahead and forget the past—'

'But the blood—the spilt blood!' interrupted Father Hugh, standing up and clasping his hands with a gesture, conventional, yet perfectly sincere, of despair. 'If Lady Macbeth could not wash away the stain of her king's blood, what can be done for a country that is drowning in the blood of her own sons, shed by their brothers?'

'We must plough it in!' said Dan, with his hands in his pockets, and his eyes on the far hills, averted from the appeal in the priest's pale, agitated face. 'We've had enough of fighting—we've got to Speed the Plough!'

'Ah, God help us!' said the priest, sinking like a beaten man back on to the seat. 'What good can the plough do?'

Dan looked down on him; compassion and sympathy were in his eyes. His manner changed.

'You're the only person I can talk to like this,' he said, sitting down again and putting a friendly hand on Fa her Hugh's knee. 'I'll say just one thing more—'

It is of no avail to record Dan's theories. There

is little doubt that they were of the large and healthy family of platitudes and truisms, methods and principles, so correct, and so obvious, that nothing could be less likely than that they should be put into practice in Irish politics. He stated his convictions as to education, as to the improvement of agriculture, as to the value of local effort apart from State aid. He said that Ireland had always been encouraged in the belief that if evil is committed with sufficient persistence good will result from it. Here he laughed, the laugh that is often heard in Ireland, in which contempt and amusement and pessimism have an equal share.

'That's been our past experience, anyhow ! Reforms painlessly extracted by Rebellions ! Well, I won't waste time in abusing England, there are plenty to do that without me. But it's impossible to deny that, logically, the rebels can make out a pretty good case for themselves. I can see their point—it's their methods I don't like.'

Father Hugh listened in silence to this discourse, which was indeed unanswerable, being a member of the large and respectable family of speeches about Ireland of which it is indulgently said that there is 'the devil a lie in them.' There was a pause ; then the young priest looked wanly at his visitor, and said :

'D'ye know Eugene Cashen, Mr. Palliser ? Eugene-the-Talk, they call him. No ? I'd like that you'd meet him. He's a hot Sinn Feiner, to be sure—what a little girl I was talking to yesterday told me *she* was—"a lighting Sinn Feiner!"—but he's a very well-instructed man, and a nice man too, and he has that way of putting a thing that 'tis impossible to contradict him.'

Statements that admit of no argument do not

appeal very specially to a young gentleman of independent views. Dan stood up and drew a long and impatient breath.

'I'd like to meet Mr. Eugene-the-Talk well enough, only that I'm sick of talk! And now I must go and hear the R.D.C. talk. You know they co-opted me the other day?'

'I heard it was old Nicholas Coyne got you elected,' said the priest, looking at Dan for a moment.

'So he did,' said Dan. 'I believe he and Jimmy Ryan worked it between them. Jimmy was keen for me to be on the Board, and I'm glad to be on it—it brings me into touch with things rather more—the things I'm interested in, you know.'

Father Hugh said nothing. Dan continued: 'There's another election coming on to-day—the Clerk of the Union. I suppose there's the usual amount of money flying about—bribes and so on! I'm backing Hyland, he's obviously the best man.'

'He is, but he'll not get it,' said Father Hugh drearily, and with entire finality.

'Why not? He told me he had canvassed the members very satisfactorily, and if they keep their promises—'

'Ah, they'll not!' interrupted the priest. 'He'll not get it.'

'But why not?' said Dan impatiently. He hated pessimism.

'There's too much money against him. You'll see it'll be Tommy Sharvin that gets it. His father has over two hundred spent already, and Mr. Coyne is supporting Tommy. It's no good for you to distress yourself at all, Mr. Palliser, you'll see young Sharvin will get it!'

Dan began to walk up the weedy gravel path to the house. He hated opposition ; almost more than opposition he hated resignation, and Father Hugh's voice had breathed resignation and the laying down of useless arms. Arms were never useless, Dan thought, or oughtn't to be.

'I met a friend of me own in Dublin not long since,' said the priest, standing on his door-step while his visitor prepared to depart. 'I was at Maynooth with him. He's a nice fellow. He's a Jesuit. John Coffey is his name. I was saying good-bye to him. He was going out to China. He said he might never come back, but anywhere in the world he was, if I'd write to him and just to put Father John Coffey, S.J., he'd get it. I said to him, "I would to God, John, I was going with you !" ' I said ; "I'm heart-sick with Ireland ! "'

'I'm very glad you didn't go with him,' said Dan, taking his limp hand, and pressing it. 'You're wanted here.'

CHAPTER VII

THE board-room of the Union at Eskragh was a long, narrow apartment, in which a severe insistence on business had excluded all merely decorative effort. Its bare table, long and narrow like the room, and its stony-hearted chairs, might have been the rudimentary expression of the first cave-man's need for furniture, so starkly adapted to their primary purposes were they. The three tall, naked windows admitted the sun's morning beams unflinchingly. There was something even allegoric in their renunciation of blinds or curtains. 'Let us have God's daylight on our every action!' they seemed to say on behalf of the occupants of the room. But they did not open. In the year 1850, or thereabouts, when the board-room was built, draughts had not developed into ventilation, and were regarded with suspicion.

The labours of the council began at eleven o'clock, and, on this hot and sunny morning, when 'Burning June' proceeded to 'wave his red flag at pitch of noon,' the temperature, mental and physical, of the members, and the board-room, had risen to a point at which no ordinary draught would have been perceptible to the most sensitive organisation. Nor, it may truly be said, was June's red flag ever waved with more fiery *abandon* than was, metaphorically, the national green banner by Baby Bullet and his following. The turning-point in the debate on the election had come with an oration from Mr. Coyne.

This, having opened with the assertion that Mr. Sharvin's suitability for the post under consideration was sufficiently attested by the fact that, young though he was, he had already, in the cause of Ireland, spent three weeks in a British dungeon, had burgeoned into an impassioned, if irrelevant, declaration of his—the Baby's—unalterable devotion to that sacred cause, and, after a few laudatory excursions into the family history of the Sharvins, had concentrated in a panegyric of the father of the candidate—an occasion which the orator deemed worthy of one of his two stock classical quotations.

'Yes, Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,' the Baby had perorated, 'all this patriotism, this fidelitee to his Church, this generositee to his native town, he gives them all *cum grano salis!*'

The breadth and fervour of Mr. Coyne's enunciation of the open vowels imparted tenderness to a display of erudition that might otherwise have been found chilling. The sentiment and the erudition were equally applauded, one only of the listeners realising that the Baby's alternative quotation, '*Pro bono publico,*' had been in his mind, though not on his tongue.

Dan was too far sunk in depression to find consolation in the thought.

'Old ass!' he thought angrily.

In which estimate of the orator young Mr. Palliser did very greatly err. He had yet to learn that beneath these glittering bubbles of fancy there ran a strong and steady tide of purpose. He had also to learn that but few of his new colleagues had come to the meeting without a pre-determined line of action, based upon reasons that, though they might not commend them-

selves to him, were inherently sound and consistent. He knew many of the members personally. He had joined a Farmers' Society, of which he had been made vice-chairman, and the hue of the rose-coloured glasses through which he regarded his country was intensified by many degrees by the impression made on him by the men whom, at the meetings of the Society, he had learnt to know, and to like, and to respect. Sound men, sensible and clever, hard-working and friendly, men of substance and character. It bewildered the beginner at the game of local self-government to discover that these administrators, in their civic capacity, recognised a different standard of morality from that which influenced their private life and conduct. It horrified him to find, unless his mentors, Jimmy Ryan and Father Hugh, were mistaken, that the majority of his fellow-councillors had sold their votes in advance, and were here, as Jimmy said, to deliver the goods. At the beginning of the proceedings Dan had urged that the credentials of the rival candidates should be read to the board, but this had been indignantly negatived by one of Mr. Coyne's henchmen, who declared that that'd only be putting another stumbling-block in their way. What was the use, he asked, of bothering with testimonials till they had the voting done? It'd be like killing a pig first and bleeding it afterwards. The illustration was perhaps more picturesque than apposite, but it carried the board with it, and Dan withdrew his suggestion.

It was no more than his second experience of the proceedings of the council, but the pangs of disillusionment had already taken hold of him, and he had rushed, possibly rather too hastily, to the conclusion that its principles were controlled by money, and its

arguments consisted of clamour and vituperation. It amazed the new member to discover how complete was the command of temper exercised by his fellows ; that is to say, of violent temper. The scream of rage, the rattle of personalities, were as sudden and as startling as is the rush and roar of a train from a tunnel. There had come moments in the course of the debate when it seemed that the debaters must inevitably pass from words to action. One such had resulted from the speech of Mr. Coyne, and with the suggestion of the chairman that the poll should be taken, what the Press subsequently described as a ‘bout of fisticuffs’ was only averted by the personal efforts of Jimmy Ryan and a few others. Baby Bullet had thrice exhorted one of his opponents to ‘conduct himself’ ; thrice, because it was not until the third admonition that his voice, which had been attuned by nature for finer issues, penetrated the din. The opponent then replied with the statement that it was easy seen that Mr. Coyne had his share of drink taken, to give him courage, for he had a face on him as red as the Earl of Hell’s waistcoat ; not content with this trope, he went on to say that it was known to all that Mr. Coyne’s old mother had gone puking at every back door in the country, with a bag on her back, and himself in it, begging spuds.

Mr. Coyne’s indignation rendered him, for an instant, inarticulate, but he lost but little time before replying, with suitable spirit :

‘Ye little weazel, ye !’ he exclaimed. ‘Ye dirty little weazel !’

To Dan it seemed that the observation was not noticeably out of key with much that had preceded it, but its effect upon the gentleman referred to was

such that he was hardly held back from a personal assault upon Mr. Coyne.

Then, above the tumult, the voice of a peacemaker was heard addressing the infuriated weazel.

' If ye go to hit annyone, Timsey, go and hit a man ! What good is it to ye to fight a feather bed, and it having a Baby in it ? '

Cheers and laughter greeted this olive-branch, while, like the pealing of a church bell in a beleagured town, the stentorian voice of Jimmy Ryan continued to shout ' Poll ! Poll ! '

Dan Palliser, patriot and reformer, sat in silence, feeling as might a man in a bombardment, whose home and hopes are crashing on his head. How, with such materials as these, was he, or anyone else, to build Jerusalem in Ireland's green and pleasant land ? Then he became aware that the outgoing clerk was engaged, in the hot heart of the battle, in taking a poll, and that the belligerents, in intervals between warcries, were, with perfect sanity, recording their votes.

The clerk handed in the result. For Mr. P. J. Hyland, 14 votes ; for Mr. T. Sharvin, 23.

' I have the pleasure to announce that Mr. Thomas Sharvin is elected Clerk of the Rural District Council of Eskragh ! ' shouted the chairman to the gentlemen of the press, and the gentlemen of the press, who had for some time laid down their pens, fell upon the information with avidity.

Dan left the room, while what the public was subsequently assured by one organ was ' cheers and counter-cheers,' and was defined by another as ' uproar,' followed him into the street.

His friend, Jimmy Ryan, also followed him, laughing.

' Well, the Baby's a great old boy-o ! ' he said, with what seemed to Dan revolting cynicism. ' I thought we had him bet this time, but he was too good for us ! '

' I don't see anything to laugh at,' said Dan.

' Well, but aren't they great play-boys ? ' persisted Mr. Ryan, still laughing, thoroughly appreciative of the flavour of the recent scene. ' They were in grand forr'm altogether ! Wasn't that a good one about the feather bed and the Baby in it ? I thought I'd have died laughing ! That little Timsey Coadey's the devil painted when he's vexed ! '

' They make me sick,' said Dan.

' Ah ! don't mind them too much, they're not all out too bad,' extenuated Jimmy. ' Wait till you're at the job a bit longer, Mr. Dan. Ye can't have it all your own way at the first offer ! '

' Damn it, man ! What do I care about my way ? ' said Dan furiously. ' All I wanted was to get the best man chosen.'

He flung himself on to his bicycle, and swept off at a speed ill befitting a magistrate in the streets of the town in which he administers justice.

CHAPTER VIII

Lá Beal Teinne, whose meaning is the Day of Baal's Fire, and whose pronunciation may be given approximately as 'Law Bawl thinné,' has been, from all the ages, the first of May. The name has fallen to us through the centuries, and lies, like a meteorite on the heather on a hillside, dark and mysterious, unnoticed in the peasant speech of Ireland, among invocations of saints, and 'Hail Marys!' and passionate phrases of mother-love and domesticity; all that is least akin to what may be imagined of the obscure ferocities of Baal's priests.

But though the first day of May, which was in ancient Ireland the first day of summer, was the day of Baal, it is on the Eve of St. John, June 23, that now the Baal fires are lit.

Dan Palliser, as has been said, was, like many another man of action, at heart a sentimentalist; he liked to think that it was the influence of his grandmother, who was one of the fairy clan of the O'Shees, that drove him out on St. John's Eve to set the furze alight on the hills. In the last June of the war, lying beside his horse on a hillside in Palestine, he had remembered the venerable rite, and thought of Elijah and the beaten priests of Baal. 'It might have been this very hill!' he said to the comrade of his vigil, and the comrade had profanely quoted Mark Twain, and had said that a little paraffin and a box of matches would have made all the difference.

St. John's Eve had come again, and Dan was back in Ireland now. As he walked home, late in the evening, from the hayfield, where the men had worked extra time, the smell of burning furze was already sharp in his nostrils, and after dinner, when he wandered into the garden, long swathes of dusky smoke lay level in the still air over the country beyond the lake.

'I'll go up and light the hill back of Monalour,' he said to himself. 'Baal shall have his rights, or his rites, whichever way he likes to spell it!'

Simplicity was the most prominent feature in Dan's sense of humour. It may be questioned if such a sense had been bestowed on him, but the question, had he heard it, would have offended him very deeply. Every young man is confident that he has been endowed by Nature with the touchstone of humour. Of Dan it would be nearer the truth to say that his natural seriousness was sometimes dispelled by the lightheartedness that is common to most youthful beings, from boys and girls to calves and kittens. The young are seldom humorous, for humour is the shadow that life throws on laughter.

Dan, with his evening trousers turned up, and with tennis shoes over his silk socks, cautiously skirted Monalour House, and its windows, by those devious paths that are known only to those who have been the children of a house, and paused a moment for observation at a convenient place of ambush. The dining-room windows were wide open, but the blinds were down. Lord Ducarrig detested 'summer-time' and daylight dinners. Margins of light were round the blinds; Dan thought of his recent dinner there, and thanked heaven that he was where he was—

'Unless I knew for certain that I were going to hear her sing again,' he qualified the thanksgiving.

He went on through the yard, and up the back avenue through the darkness under the dense foliage of its oaks, whistling softly the air of one of those pontifical songs that Lady Ducarrig's voice had consecrated anew for him. At the back of his mind there was ever a tune, even as in the marshy places of his own hills, the grass and the wild flowers had their roots in water.

Up, on the hill, above the fields into which the dairy cows were driven from the byre for their nightly pasturage, he offered the first tribute to the pagan past. The last few days had been dry and hot, and the furze lit and blazed with quick response to his fire. There is something inherently attractive in incendiaryism; many methods of destruction can be exhilarating, but none are as decorative. Very soon leaping streams of red fire and whirling coils and billows and banners of smoke, brown and fawn, golden and dove-blue, were rolling and tumbling in an ever-changing yet ordered tumult. They rushed westward, on the light wind, between Dan and the rest of the world, while, etherially remote from the coarse storm of fire and smoke below, wildly fluttering wisps of pink and orange flame flickered upwards, like the tongues of myriad serpents, and vanished thinly in the still air.

The upper stretches of the hill were thickly overgrown with tall furze-bushes, and the spirit of the farmer abetted the spirit of destruction. These blackened stems, arising from drifts of grey ashes, whose fierce life had been appropriately sacrificed on Baal's altar, should make way for green grass for

mild dairy cows. Dan went to the western limits of his land and worked slowly back, against the wind, to the high knoll above the farmyard, lighting the furze as he came. The lake lay far off and pale, half hidden in smoke, beyond the grassy levels of the lawn. A few stars were in the sky. He looked at his watch. It was nearly ten o'clock. But that was English time. 'It's only half-past eight,' he thought. 'Baal shall have another blaze.' Uppermost in the weaving melodies in his mind came the chorus of the priests of Baal from the 'Elijah.' 'Oh, Baal, hear us ! Oh, Baal, hear us !' he sang out in his strong bass.

The chorus was taken up by a voice behind him.

'Hear, oh hear, and answer us !'

In all his surprise he had not an instant of uncertainty as to whose the voice was. He swung round, knowing perfectly that it was Lady Ducarrig who had finished the phrase.

'I was walking in the garden after dinner, in the cool of the evening,' she said, 'like Adam and Eve—at least partly, *not* as to costume—and I saw the fires, and thought there might be a Sinn Fein rising, so I came out to see the fun.'

Dan felt, as he told himself, clod-hopperish and inadequate. This fine lady was herself so very much cooler than the evening, with her talk about Adam and Eve and their costumes. And her own costume, her tea-gown—or whatever it was—misty and many-coloured, with parts of it that shone like a fish's scales, and other parts that had the sparkle of jewels in them ; and her beauty, her careless, conscious, unconscious beauty, which she was so used to, so he thought, that she had given up realising it—he couldn't cope with her ; she had made him look like

a fool once and she would do it again. Confound Baal, and his fires too, that had let him in for this !

Car Ducarrig, entirely aware of her landlord's perturbations, selected with deliberation a smooth lump of rock and seated herself upon it. Then she asked him for a cigarette.

He handed her his case and a box of matches.

' No, give me a light from one of your heathen bonfires. Matches put it all out of key ! '

Dan searched and found a long dry stem of bracken ; he lit it at the nearest flame and held it for her.

' How nice of you to have been here ! This is just what I wanted,' she said, with the light and lazy drawl that gave her voice a subtle attraction. ' Do sit down. You're so tall, I feel as if I were talking to a rook in the top of a tree.' (' I'll shake him out of his idiotic shyness before I've done with him ! ' she thought.)

' I'm sorry,' said Dan humbly. He sat down on the heather and began to light a cigarette, while Car talked on idly about nothing at all, just to quiet him, as she said to herself, considering him the while, debating with herself as to his handling, as a trainer might ponder over alternative methods of biting a nervous colt.

The subject under consideration, unaware that he was being sliced in section and prepared for the microscope, leaned back on his couch of dry and springy heather, smoking, and—for the love of beauty will master shyness—finding himself unable to keep his eyes from watching Lady Ducarrig's face. They were on the very ridge of the hill. He saw her against the wondrous background of summer-night sky, that was like an opal in its iridescent pallor and changefulness. He began to think that if he could venture deeper into

the sheer beauty of her eyes he might find sympathy beneath their serenity. Good-fellowship was in her voice certainly, with all its coolness and indifference. He began to feel peace flowing round him, and to be able to yield himself to the mere sensuous pleasure of looking at her ; even, once, of letting his eyes meet hers and look in them for what he believed he might find there.

Car Ducarrig had that afternoon had a visit from Dan's cousin, Miss Katie de Vere, and it is probable that had he guessed that Katie had given herself the pleasure of expounding him, the sense of reassurement, together with the dawning belief that he might find in Lady Ducarrig a sympathetic listener to the subjects that engrossed him, would have expired without a sound. ' My dear Lady Ducarrig,' Miss de Vere had said, ' he and my unfortunate cousin, his father, have been, quite simply, *squashed* by Georgina Palliser ! ' To which Lady Ducarrig had replied, ' Do tell me *all* about it, and when you get to the squashing part, go *very* slowly.'

Katie de Vere had not required urging. Her powers of description were considerable, and were restrained by no hampering reticences.

' At this very moment, big as he is, Georgina is capable of putting him across her knee and spanking him well if he didn't do exactly as she told him ! ' Katie had declared. ' But I'm not so sure that he will stand it much longer. The war stiffened him, I think. I believe she'll find him a very different proposition from poor old Henry ! Sons take after their mothers, you know ! . . . She wants to marry him to Eileen Caulfield and keep them both under her thumb—but, I wonder ! ' (' Oh, so *that's* it, is it ? ' Car thought. ' Poor Sir Daniel ! ') ' I don't think he's interested

in Eileen, or any girl. It's all farming and politics with him now—I only hope he'll not go too far and get himself into trouble—'

Thus did Miss de Vere expound her young kinsman, feeling that she did so in safety, since (being a person of shrewdness) she recognised that Lady Ducarrig was a young woman who knew how to hold her tongue.

Up on the high places of the hill over Monalour the light faded slowly. A wide country lay around, and deep in it, and through it, on every side, the points of fire twinkled through drifting smoke. Just below the topmost ridge a great brake crackled and spat and roared, and the flames rushed past in veils of eddying smoke. Close to Dan and Car a little fire was nibbling its way like a rabbit through low heather. On the far north-western horizon day's fires, also, were still alight, a strange yellow flare, against which the serrated outlines of the mountains beyond the Vale of Esker showed sharp. Round the two watchers on the ridge the smoke swirled, sometimes thin as a veil, sometimes in dense dun-coloured billows. They sat in silence, gazing at it, hypnotised by its ever-changing monotony.

Car was the first to speak.

' This is what it will be like when we die—Mystery !

*"And the souls mounting up to God
Went by her like thin flames,"'*

she said, as if she were speaking to herself. Then she looked at Dan. ' Do you know you look exactly like Rodin's "Penseur." What are you thinking about ? '

' I'm wondering if any of those fires are police barracks,' said Dan, in a low voice ; he was sitting up, staring in front of him, his chin on his hand.

' You know,' Car said, ' I know nothing about this Irish mess. Every one I meet tells me every one else

is all wrong and ought to be shot. I can arrive at nothing more helpful or constructive than that !'

'I can assure you that they'd all agree in the advantage of wiping out people like me !' said Dan, with a laugh that had no mirth in it. '"Mr. Facing-both-ways" is what they would call me, if they ever read anything but the newspapers. But they don't.'

Car looked at his strong profile ; the low, overhanging brow, the short, straight nose, the sharp-cut mouth, and what Eileen had called his big rock of a chin.

'I should have said you looked like a fighter ! Not at all like Mr. Facing-both-ways.'

'But I am, though,' said Dan, 'because I see good on both sides, and that's fatal. Also, I'm sick of fighting. I've had enough of it.'

He rose from the heather and stood, looking enormous, between Car and the dim sky. In the curious isolation of this high place, remote, smoke-curtained from the world, the spell of her personality had made him forget his shyness.

'There's one thing I'm certain of,' he went on. 'There's no big lot of Irishmen are bad fellows, but there are blackguards everywhere, and they're the ones you hear most about. Don't believe that they're all blackguards !' he said, with sudden vehemence ; 'Look at this country ! The police gone, our arms taken from us, either by raiders or by the Government—it comes to the same thing ! Our houses absolutely defenceless—a baby could get into any house in the country if it wanted to, at any hour of the day or night—and what happens ? My mother, and the rest of them, who want to "drench the country with blood," go to bed, and sleep as peacefully as if they were in London—and with far less chance of being

burgled !' he added, with a fleeting touch of satisfaction that not in all things was England superior to his country.

Car's grey eyes, lit with interest, met his. She felt as if he had let fall a domino and shown her himself, or as if the deep smoke had parted and revealed its heart of fire.

Dan rushed on with his theme, casting at her feet the headlong confidences of a shy soul whose guards are down.

'Even these murders of policemen and soldiers—whoever commits them, they say there's a murder-gang—God knows I don't defend them ! Call them as brutal and cowardly and senseless as you like, I'll go all the way with you, but at least you must admit that they're not personal, not done for private interests, or money, or for what is called Love—in England !' He flung out the word hotly. 'I'm tired of all the abuse going one way !' He ended on a note of defiance.

'But please, Mr. Palliser,' said Car, laughing at him, 'I'm not abusing anyone, and I'll admit anything you like, and I'm *not* English ! only a sort of mongrel—Irish and English—and a touch of Spanish too, I believe !'

He was standing beside her ; as she rose from her seat on the rock, she stumbled and caught at his arm, steadyng herself ; her hand, a lovely hand, white, sensitive, flashing with rings, rested there for an instant.

Dan's apologies died on his lips ; his rage with himself for having laid aside the armour of his reserve was forgotten. Unknowingly he had shown her his heart, he had worn it on his sleeve ; but, after all, had he not done well to wear it there, since thus it had come to pass that so lovely a hand should have been laid upon it ?

CHAPTER IX

DAN PALLISER had said to his friend, Father Hugh Macnamara, that it was the small local efforts that counted. He set himself to make good his assertion, and was not long in discovering that, however small and local an effort may be, few things count for much without considerable expenditure of energy. Also, that even energy will fail unless that force, whose precise definition is evaded in the word 'personality,' informs and irradiates it, as the electric currents hiss and glow at the heart of the engine. He felt this instinctively, knowing, not as theory, but as fact, that the conduct of what he and his fellows were in the habit of calling 'stunts' could not be deputed. Even in the case of a 'stunt' that had begun to move, if he left it to a deputy its life drooped. Nothing but the substitution of himself for the deputy could revive it. With his election to the District Council he believed that his opportunity had come. He thought that it gave him a standpoint, and that his declaration that he had no politics was enough to persuade the men of the class that produces the fiercest and most bigoted politicians in the world, to set their own views on one side and to follow him. He was going to calm Ireland by means of continuous cropping, to engross her superfluous energies in milk records. He preached Co-operation in all its aspects—farm implements, materials, creameries. It has been said that only an Irishman would attempt to establish co-operation by means of separators. The

jest, had Dan even perceived it, would not have moved him, even to a frown. His feelings on the subject of agriculture might be summarised in the saying of another earnest Irishman : ‘ There’s some things is too serious for joking—and one o’ them’s potatoes ! ’

Day after day Dan rode through the country, explaining, exhorting, entreating, trying to make crooked places straight, and to make plain what he believed to be the Way of the Lord. Who dares to say that he failed—that any faithful effort fails ? The messenger’s heart may break in what has seemed fruitless endeavour, but it may be that his message has set something moving whose issues are beyond his knowledge and are independent of his fate.

Dan found himself unable to decide if his messages were or were not appreciated. On the whole, he feared, not. Discouraging, perhaps, yet difficulty is stimulating to an energetic young man, whose activities at home had hitherto been straitly limited by his parents to supervising the lawn-tennis ground and exercising his own horse. Until the old Colonel’s death, Dan had never, since he was ten years old, lived at home, officially and permanently. Holidays from school, vacations from Cambridge, leaves from the Army—these were all only visits, enjoyable and quite irresponsible. Then, during the past two years, there had ensued the Agricultural College. Dan returned three times a year from his classes of intensive instruction in scientific farming, burning with theories, on fire to put them into practice. His father and Tom McLoughlen listened respectfully to the theories, and would as soon have put them into practice as they would have gone into the fair at Eskragh prepared to obey the instructions given to the Apostles.

And if the comparatively easy-going Colonel shut his ears to the knocking on the door of the young generation, it is not too much to say that Mrs. Palliser shut, not only her ears, but also the door, and slammed and bolted it. The departed Colonel, looking down from the cloud just over Monalour (on which, if choice were left him in the matter, he would certainly have established himself) probably realised too late that the repression of Dan had been a mistake. But Mrs. Palliser, entrenched in the Lake House drawing-room, iron reactionary and thwarted autocrat, not sharing her husband's elevated point of view, refused to admit defeat. Let Dan burst into follies of farming if he liked, and indulge in frenzies of fraternity with those whom she unhesitatingly stigmatised as rebels (or, in any case, persons whose politics differed from hers). Dan might forget his position ; but she retained hers, and it was a position of vantage. Though the demesne of Monalour might belong to him, and the house was his, her faithful Henry had left to her not only the Lake House, but also the furniture of Monalour. Mrs. Palliser (who loved *clichés*) told herself that she held the keys of the position.

It is, no doubt, a very general habit of mothers, human and otherwise, to love their offspring, and Dan's mother was, strictly speaking, no exception to this rule. But methods of expressing affection vary. It had happened to Lizzie, at an earlier period of her career, to have brought forth a son. Beginning with jealous and intemperate adoration, she had moved rapidly on to boredom ; then, as the creature, that had so bewilderingly forced his entrance into her world, grew older, she discovered possibilities in him as a playmate. She played ; an acrid play that had in it

all the potential ferocity of the War-Game. The son, who had grown as much larger than his mother as she exceeded him in force of character, was more frightened than gratified. He responded with a lumbering imitation of her methods that seldom failed to raise the game from the status of play to that of business. But did Peggy, as sometimes happened, attempt to join in the fray, the family ranks closed and an unbroken front was presented.

It is not pretended that the case of Lizzie applies precisely to Mrs. Palliser ; for one thing, she never played. But it may pass as a general indication of her attitude. These things being so, it was fortunate that, when Dan first entered upon public life, Mrs. Palliser, in the new freedom of widowhood, had betaken herself to her early home in Ulster, there to circulate among married sisters, in a series of visits whose many fervid incidents might have inspired the reflection that although blood is undoubtedly thicker than water, it is its only point of superiority.

Mrs. Palliser's only child, thus abandoned, found himself uncomplainingly grateful for the empty and silent house. Even the servants, save one ancient, left to minister to him, were away on holidays. He and Lizzie and Peggy came and went as they pleased. Dan's pamphlets on co-operative societies, on green crops and silage, on milk yields and Friesian cattle, were thick on tables, chairs and floors. The dogs lay lawlessly on sofas, and begged without rebuff at meals. Dan sat up half the night, with Lizzie in rigid slumber on his knees, reading, brooding, preparing statistics for his next Farmers' Meeting. His profoundest emotions were absorbed in the dream of a Friesian herd ; the thought of a thousand-gallon cow stirred

him as the thought of the Sacred Cow of Plenty might thrill a Hindu worshipper. But concurrently with these interests a uncomfortable thought pursued him ; he knew that however aloof he might, ostensibly, stand from Irish politics, his inner convictions had begun to diverge from the creed that had boomed in his ears from his youth up. ‘ I’m not a Unionist,’ he reflected, ‘ and I’m certainly not a Sinn Feiner. I suppose I’m among the half-tones, what they call “ pastel tints ”—“ Mr. Facing-both-ways ”? No, hang it ! I’m nothing ! ’

He placed Lizzie, petrified like an Ammonite in a stony coil, on the sofa, and walked to the open window and looked out into the summer night. There was a faint light from a young moon. He saw a fox steal out of the shrubbery and cross the little lawn, and he wished him luck with the rabbits that were devastating the flower garden. Then he thought of the night he had been out on the hill, St. John’s Eve, and something purely physical caught him, and held him still, as he remembered the voice that had completed his own snatch of singing, the hand that had touched the heart on his sleeve. He sat on the window-sill and swung his long legs out, and walked on to the dewy grass, and then, inconsequently, he said aloud to the few little stars that were opening their eyes in the pale sky ‘ But by George ! What a voice ! ’ And what a night too ! Mild and mysterious ; how could he go to bed and lie down and sleep ? His strong youth rejoiced in him, but it disquieted him too ; a tide of vitality, racing like a mill-stream, and no available mill to be turned ! If only the day were here, and he could go and hustle the farm men, or ride away and beat up recruits for the milk record scheme. He had

walked down the shrubbery path without thinking, and found himself standing on the sward by the lake side, close to the boulder on which he and Eileen had seen Lady Ducarrig sitting. Lizzie had slipped, shadow-like, after him. Now she sat on his instep, disliking the dew. A low ground-mist hung over the Big Lawn. He could just see the dim shapes of his cows lying down, and, a little farther away in the greyness, the farm-horses standing, tearing mouthfuls of grass with sleepless appetite. He moved in among the cattle, trying to identify them, filled with prosaic, pastoral speculations as to their possible achievements in dairy efforts. Was a future thousand-gallon heroine latent among them? He strayed on over the grass, while little Lizzie flitted like a white moth round him, tracking down rabbits, now and then wafted in trepidation from her intentions by the gusty, angrily-expelled breath of a startled cow. The house that had been his father's—he could not even yet feel that it was his—was a denser grey shadow at the farther end of the lawn. It was but little past ten o'clock and some lights pierced the shadow. He went nearer, and the delicate sound of a piano came to him through the quiet night. His wandering steps lost their indefiniteness. This was luck coming to him. The night wanted but music. He went in long strides to the bridge across the sunk fence, while the sound deepened and gained body, and that strange conviction of romance that can sometimes be born of music made by one unseen, coming out of the hidden secret of a house to a listener in the open air, came upon him. He crossed the bridge, and keeping in the gloom of the shrubs, crept nearer. The music ceased. Dan waited; he thought that

the intensity of his desire to hear her voice again must have effect.

Perhaps that was in truth the reason that gradually, almost as a perfume makes itself felt, her voice stole to his ear. There are possibly many, like Dan Palliser, who keep in their hearts an ideal conception of how the songs that to them mean music's self should be sung ; but not to many, as to him, is it given to wait unseen in the sweet night, and to hear their ideal clothed upon, given a life beyond their dreams, poured in golden sound into the empty air, as lavishly as the sun pours his gold into an empty and lonely mountain valley. He stood there, lost to everything but the joy of hearing. She sang on ; the great songs that he knew and worshipped, and had never thought to hear as he now heard them ; other songs that he had half known, without understanding what beauty they could be made to yield ; and then a few brief folk songs, clear and soft and gentle as the dew on the grass in the darkness behind him.

He had been drawn irresistibly to the open French window by which the piano stood, hardly knowing what he was doing. He leaned his head against the wall of the house, beyond the reach of the light ; tears were in his eyes, tears of that senseless emotion that has its unexplainable, senseless origin in the senses. Time and the world stood still. Dan Palliser, struggling farmer, disregarded reformer, existed no more, nor was there any more an incalculable, disquieting Lady Ducarrig. He was a listener, she was a voice, divine and golden . . .

The voice ceased, there were a few faint trailing sprays of notes, like a dim illumination at the foot of a page of a missal, and the piano ceased too.

Dan came back with a jerk as he heard Car Ducarrig say, 'And who, may I inquire, are you ?'

He knew himself to be invisible, and waited. 'Get up, you absurd little thing ! I remember you now.'

Then he knew that Lizzie had pried her way into the room, and was, according to her practice when in doubt, doing 'Poojah,' lying on her side, feebly pawing the air, in exemplification of her belief in the axiom that it is impossible to strike where there is neither fear nor resistance.

'You must go home, you know—though how I'm to get you there——'

Lizzie's shamefaced proprietor stepped out into the fan of light from the open window.

'I'm so sorry,' he began, 'I heard you singing, I couldn't help coming——'

'But why shouldn't you come ? I was only singing to please myself, but I love an audience.'

Dan's eyes, looking beyond her, saw, at the far end of the farther room, a black recumbent form upon the old sofa that he knew so well. A newspaper sheltered the face from the light of the lamps, on the floor was a board bespread with patience cards.

'Oh yes, Arnold's there. Happily for him my singing puts him to sleep. I daresay he'll wake now.'

The newspaper rustled to the floor. Lord Ducarrig awoke with a snort and sat up.

'Who's there ?' he said, with the irritation of a gentleman whose sleep has been broken. 'Why the devil do you keep that window open, Car ?' A further realisation of the conditions came to him. 'Who's that out there ?' he asked sharply.

'You needn't agitate yourself, my dear,' said Car, in her indifferent voice. 'It isn't a raid—there are no

Sinn Feiners ! It's only the landlord come to accuse me of maltreating his piano ! '

Ducarrig rose, and walked stiffly through the two long rooms to the window outside of which Dan was still standing.

' Oh, it's you, Palliser, is it ? 'Pon my soul, I thought it was some of those damned raiders come for my guns ! Come in, won't you ? '

Dan made explanations and apologies.

' I heard the music——'

' And that brought you, did it ? By Jove ! Funny how tastes differ ! But please continue the entertainment. Don't let me spoil sport. Thank God I can always go to sleep.'

Lord Ducarrig, red and puffy with after dinner sleep, angry at having been needlessly alarmed and awakened, was not at his best. Dan found it difficult to decide if his manner or his appearance were the more unattractive. He waited with confidence for the fire that must surely fall from Heaven and consume the blasphemer. It came not, but Lady Ducarrig's smile as she looked at her husband, seemed to Dan to have a quality in it that would have scorched most people.

CHAPTER X

JUNE had gone out in torrents, and July came in with the weather that is called close, presumably because of the nearness to earth of the canopy of the sky ; with hot, grey, steaming days, beloved of flies, days when cattle put their tails over their backs and run, and people look sapiently at the low heavens and say thunder is coming.

Dan rode a tall, well-bred young mare through his own land and over some of his own fences (which she jumped gallantly, but ignorantly) until he came to a gate in the demesne wall. Beyond the wall was the road, and on the road, mounted on a fidgeting three-year-old who was several sizes too small for him, was Jimmy Ryan, waiting for him.

'Very good,' said Jimmy, looking at his watch, '*'Tis this minyute only I'm here ; I'm glad I wasn't waiting on you ! Them flies have the Horseen mad altogether !*'

The three-year-old he was riding here justified the statement by a composite movement of annoyance, that included the salient features of a buck and a plunge, and culminated in a kick that missed the shining chestnut shoulder of Dan's mare by very little.

'Oh fie, fie !' said Jimmy, beating his infant mount heavily with an ash plant. 'It's little I'd be on the roads with him, this weather at all, only for the Show commytee meeting, and the promise I gave the poor old Baby.'

‘ What did you promise him ? ’

‘ That I’d vote for him getting the coal contract, sure ; and this is the day it’ll be settled,’ replied Jimmy ; he leant over backwards and slapped, weightily, a horse-fly that was maddeningly out of reach of the three-year-old’s switching tail. ‘ Did he speak to you at all ? ’

‘ He did, but I didn’t promise anything.’

‘ I’ll say this for the Baby,’ said Jimmy, with a large candour, ‘ the coal he had last year was the best value was in it, but they outvoted him. Monaghan had them well regulated ! And it was dirty stuff Monaghan had after all, for I seen it. Half stones it was. I was on the House Commytee. I b’lieve it’s the same he has again, but they say the old Baby has a cargo of the best this year—and indeed what he had last year was good too. They had a right to have give him the contract.’

‘ That old chap always strikes me as being the very cut of a rogue,’ said Dan carelessly.

‘ Rogue or no,’ said Jimmy, with a carelessness equally serene and far more artistic, ‘ it’s his coal I’ll vote for. His coal’s all right whatever himself is ! ’

The neophyte, listening attentively, decided to do the same ; but he did not say so, having vowed to his conscience never to divulge his intentions as to voting until the time arrived to declare them officially, a vow inspired by a righteous hatred of that ‘ method of obtaining votes ’ of which Baby Bullet had boasted himself of being the introducer, and that, in this particular instance, caused Mr. Ryan, as a man of honour, to suffer acute anxiety, until his disciple justified the preparation bestowed on him, and voted what was spoken of as ‘ The Baby’s Way.’

The competition, like the weather, was hot and close. Every vote was keenly awaited, and the Baby triumphed by a majority of one only.

'Our vote !' thought Jimmy Ryan. 'I'll not let the old lad hear the end 'o that in a hurry ! I'll rub it well into him !'

Mr. Coyne's gratitude, however, needed no massage. He followed Dan out of the board-room.

'Mr. Palliser, sir ! A word with you !'

He laid hold of as much of Dan's big fist as his little pulpy paw could enclose, and oscillated it. 'I'm proud to see that you are a young gentleman that recognises the obligations that circumstances impose upon a man of honour !' Thus Baby Bullet, wheezing squeakily, or squeaking wheezily ; (it is hard to define his utterance, impossible to indicate the invariable stressing of the wrong syllable, that lent so exotic a charm to his conversation.) 'I shall not forget it that you, Mr. Palliser, remembered that one good turr'n deserves another, and that a Friend in need is a Friend indeed !' The Baby was something of a conscious artist in words, and having thus plumed his commendation, according to his most trusted formula in oratory, with proverbial philosophy, he left it waving in the breeze, and withdrew without waiting for Dan's response.

And this was, perhaps, as well, since had young Mr. Palliser gathered in any degree what was the nature of the obligations referred to, a serious rift in the present mutually friendly relations might have occurred. Young Mr. Palliser was indeed puzzled by the form in which Mr. Coyne's gratitude had been couched, but he knew himself to be unversed in the idiom of his new colleagues, and decided to accept the Baby's compliments without trying to understand them.

In Ireland the rights of succession and inheritance are respected unfailingly. An office or privilege which has been held by a father is felt to be the lawful due of his son. Therefore it was that, on the death of Colonel Palliser, the Presidentship of the Agricultural Society of Eskragh passed, almost automatically, to his son, and Dan, an ex-British officer, son of a landlord and loyalist, was placed unquestioningly on the box seat of a coach whose officials and passengers were theoretically antagonistic to him on almost every point of conduct, religion, and politics.

In the troubled year of which this history treats, a singular feature of the life of some inconspicuous Irish places was its continued immunity from the ferment that was distracting the greater part of Ireland, towns and country alike. The political trumpets, sounding *fanfares* of defiance and independence, were no doubt bravely blown at Eskragh, no less than in other places of more importance, but the life of the town moved on tranquilly enough, and to hate your political enemies was a counsel of perfection which did not trouble many.

The business of the Rural District Board having been accomplished, Messrs. Palliser and Ryan addressed themselves to the further duty of which Jimmy had spoken, the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Agricultural Show. They rode slowly through the streets of Eskragh, which was a small town, whose undoubted prosperity had no arrogance about it, and was concealed behind undecorative shop-fronts, and public-house windows that seemed to court obscurity, and was further masked by a general dinginess and absence of fresh paint.

The show-ground was at the foot of a hill, about a mile from the town, at the head of the Vale of Esker,

and the road down the hill was now distinguished by the presence of the Executive Committee of the Show on their way to the meeting. A motor-car was standing at the gate in the wall of the enclosure. Its appearance caused a perceptible stir among the advancing committee-men ; young Mr. Mahony, the Hon. Sec., even went so far as to take out his pocket handkerchief and flick the dust off his boots and gaiters.

' We asked Lord Ducarrig to join the commytee,' he explained to Dan. ' That's his car, I think—and isn't that her ladyship in it ? '

It was indeed her ladyship, and the committee was frankly fluttered. But Lord Ducarrig was not there. He had sent his apologies and excuses. ' I said I would take the message for him,' said her obliging ladyship, and added that she would like so much to see the show-ground, if the committee would be so very kind as to let her go in ? A smile, that seemed to each member of the committee to be exclusively dedicated to him, accompanied the request, and each member strove to outshine the other in his appropriation of it. It was the Hon. Sec. who sprang the fastest from his horse and handed this thrilling visitor out of the car and to the gate, expressing mellifluous regrets that they had come to the small gate and not the carriage entrance.

' We hadn't expected such an honour as Lady Ducarrig's presence ! ' said Mr. Mahony archly.

Dan led his mare through the narrow gateway. He had not met Lady Ducarrig since the night he and Lizzie had been at Monalour, more than a week ago. He followed her and Mr. Mahony across the thick grass that covered the show-ground, listening to the easy flow of their conversation, marvelling at the skill with

which Mr. Mahony was being handled. He wondered if he also had been handled by her, and if he would ever really know her. On St. John's Eve she had been sympathetic, almost simple. He had rather let himself go—he shuddered, and thought he had probably made an ass of himself—but she had certainly seemed to be interested ; and the night she had sung—providentially he hadn't had time to make an ass of himself that time, though he was quite ready to do so—but that was her singing, of course. And she was nice with Lizzie, and, by Jove, she was good-looking ! Her looks and her voice were all right—he thought of her profile as he had seen it clear-cut against the opal sky—but that, as a matter of fact, was all he knew about her. Also, he was aware that he invariably met her with apprehension—he was rather frightened now—but the funk didn't survive five minutes of her society. Even now, when he had received his share of the smile that had bowled out poor Mr. Mahony, he could feel the apprehension rising from him like a mist. She was obviously glad to see him—but did all the other men think the same thing ? He believed they did ! And, but this was a *non sequitur*, why on earth had she married Ducarrig ?

At this juncture Lady Ducarrig paused, and let him and the chestnut mare overtake her.

‘ I've got a horse that I thought of jumping here,’ she said to him. ‘ You've seen him, haven't you ? Gambler, a bay. What do you think ? Is the bank all right ? He's a nice horse. I want to hunt him here next season—that's to say if the hounds aren't stopped ! What do *you* think is going to happen, Mr. Mahony ? ’

‘ Ah, that's a good, homely, honest bank ! ’ said Mr. Mahony, lightly passing by the controversial topic

of the hunting. ‘Your ladyship should ride the horse yourself ! I’ll be bound he’ll dance over it with you !’

They walked on to the bank, and Mr. Mahony, still extolling its moral qualities, climbed to its summit, and himself danced on it to show its reliability. Dan and the mare were standing near, and Mr. Mahony, to whose head Lady Ducarrig had gone like new wine, suggested exuberantly that Mr. Palliser should show her ladyship what sort of a lep it was.

‘The mare’s too green,’ said Dan curtly.

Mr. Mahony argued the point with much gaiety, and appealed to the inspirer of his jocund mood for support.

Car was still in process of making up her mind, slowly and luxuriously, about Dan Palliser. His type was unfamiliar, and she deeply enjoyed investigating strange types. He had satisfied her on some points, but, since she was herself a rider, he had still to prove himself as a horseman. Not precisely as to skill ; that, she said to herself, she didn’t exact ; it was a gift of God, and was in a class by itself ; but a small malicious wish to test his riding-nerve was roused by his refusal. ‘Having an M.C. won’t prevent his funking at a fence !’ she thought, watching his sullen face. She rather liked his sullenness. There was something in it that pleased her, a sort of prehistoric male frankness of mood—no feminine artifice or truckling. She had ever found a sufficing reason for preferring men to women in that they amused her more.

‘I’ve hunted a lot in England,’ she said, ‘but I’ve never seen a bank jumped. I’m sorry your mare isn’t up to it.’

Some telepathic hint of her thought reached Dan and stung him. He said to himself angrily that he

wouldn't be rushed. It was a fool's trick to ask a young mare, only half schooled, to tackle a show-jump, with the wings broken, too ! Lady Ducarrig might think what she liked—

Jimmy Ryan's voice, confidential and authoritative, said in his ear: 'Do not, Mr. Dan ! Don't mind them ! Don't wrong the mare !'

Damn Jimmy Ryan ! What business was it of his ! Dan backed the mare away from the fence and swung himself on to her back.

'She can jump it well enough if she likes,' he said, picking up his reins. 'Give me room please !'

Mr. Mahony, who had been taken by surprise by the sudden change of programme, skipped off the bank with considerable speed, and was not more than clear of it when Dan and the young mare came galloping at it.

The young mare was full of admirable qualities. Big as she was, she possessed a mouth of silk elastic, her gallop was smoother than sweet oil. Was she not by Wild Minstrel out of Lady Meath (who, as any one who had ever met Jimmy Ryan knew, was by Royal Meath) ? And had not Jimmy declared of her that any one'd lose his life galloping her, even as one might die of a rose in aromatic pain ? She had already a creditable method in dealing with a wall, or even a bank, but a show-jump, a meaningless mound, without, as she said to herself, either beginning or ending, and with, moreover, bewildering flounces of timber on both sides of it, was a problem with which she felt sure she was unable to cope. Nevertheless, she came at it boldly, her handsome head up, her wild eyes set on the bank, her ears pricked as if her heart was for it. But at the edge of the shallow drain in front of the bank

her confidence failed. She whirled to one side, and stopped herself abruptly, with her chest against the shaky barrier that formed the right wing. Her rider might have been excused had it unseated him, Lady Ducarrig thought, but Dan's long legs were equal to the call made on them. He pulled the mare back clear of the wings ; he had no spurs, but he struck her hard with the light ash plant that he carried and cantered her out a little way into the open field.

Car watched him and the big young mare with æsthetic enjoyment. The chestnut, big as she was, was a light mover, and Sir Daniel certainly sat her well. 'His nerve's all right,' Car thought. 'I'm glad of that. He was only cross. The great idiot !'

He was turning the mare now. She came round with a wheeling plunge, and began to gallop with three such bounds as Pegasus might have made, spurning this lower earth, starting for the zenith. Dan held her straight for the bank, and, as she came at it, he hit her again on the shoulder, but, as he took his right hand off the reins, the young mare, getting angry now, swung violently away from the bank, rose at the timber that formed the left wing, and crashed over it, pulling it down in ruins with her hind legs.

'Oh my, oh my !' wailed Jimmy Ryan, running out after her to try and see if she were cut. 'She'll be destroyed ! Give over, Master Dan, for God's sake !'

Dan's only answer was to hit the plunging mare again, and galloping out rather farther than before, he drove her at the bank at a pace that told that his temper had risen with the mare's. This time he had her hard in hand, and she knew it ; she came at the jump ramping and fighting for her head ; it looked as if she meant to fly the whole erection, but again, at the

brink of the drain, her courage failed. She tried to check herself, but her speed mastered her, and she sprang wildly at the bank. It was a high jump, but the unexpended pace carried her ; she got her forefeet on top of it, but she missed her footing with the hind, and, just escaping getting astride of it, she fell, turning a complete somersault, on the farther side.

'She's on top of him ! He's killed !' cried young Mahony, rushing round, followed by Jimmy Ryan, to where horse and rider lay together on the ground.

After the mare's second refusal, Car had taken her stand on the landing side, and before the men could reach Dan, she was kneeling beside him.

The chestnut mare was struggling to her feet, and Jimmy caught her bridle.

'She didn't fall on him,' said Car, watching Dan's face keenly.

Almost immediately he opened his eyes.

'I'm not hurt' he said, thickly, 'only just——'

'Keep quiet !' said Car, in an even voice, her finger on his pulse. 'You'll be all right in a minute. I think the mare's all right too.'

'I'd like to have another go at it,' muttered Dan, half raising himself on one elbow.

'Well, you won't,' said Car smoothly. 'Please don't be an idiot !'

'I rode her too fast the last time,' went on Dan obstinately. 'I'll be all right in a minute.'

'Take that mare away, and get my motor in here, will you ?' said Car to the two men. 'I suppose there's no water, or brandy, anywhere near ?'

'The Vice-President might have a drop of whisky on him !' murmured Mr. Mahony.

'More likely inside him !' said Jimmy Ryan,

sardonically, beginning to lead the sweating mare away.

Car looked at her patient ; she didn't think well of his colour nor of his breathing. She took off the dust coat that she had on, and, rolling it, put it under his head.

' You've got to do what you're told, for once ! ' she said. ' I'm sorry, but you must submit to being bullied ! '

' But I assure you nothing's wrong except that I'm a bit short of wind—a little thing knocks me out sometimes still.' It was one of the remaining penalties of his wound that it occasionally asserted itself, and involved him in the detested necessity of mentioning it.

' Now keep quiet, like a good child, until we get that drop o' whisky off the Vice-President ! ' said Car, with her sudden, beguiling smile. ' Remember, I've been at the War too ! I didn't nurse Tommies for two years for nothing ! '

CHAPTER XI

IRELAND has ever been a little backward in the world's time-table, and, as in the case of her clocks, has resented efforts to hasten either her hands or her feet. She prefers, and there is no reason why she should be blamed for the preference, to make and take her own time.

'Arrah, what's time !' said, with magnificent contempt, Admiral Caulfield's venerable butler, dealing high-handedly with a railing accusation in connection with the sounding of the dinner-gong.

And not alone in the absolute case of hours and minutes is Ireland disposed to take her own time. In social matters, and especially in the case of the emancipation of her daughters from family bondage, she has been disposed to linger and postpone. Mrs. Caulfield was very much of her butler's opinion as to the unimportance of the mere passage of time. She dwelt in the Valley of Ajalon ; the sun had long since stood still for her over the line of the mountains beyond the lake. Her unmarried sisters were still the Girls ; her brothers (whether married or no) were the Boys, and her own progeny remained the Children. These, with the exception of her youngest daughter, had escaped from bondage, either by help of their professions, or, in the case of the girls, by the only gate into freedom that their mother recognised, that of matrimony ; but Eileen remained what Mrs. Caulfield was in the habit of describing as 'The-girl-at-home.'

Mrs. Caulfield, mild and mountainous, as selfish as she was obstinate, as dull as she was selfish, covered and overwhelmed the last remaining girl-at-home as a large hen might spread its wings over a single chicken. Fluffy and warm as the nest was, any chicken at four-and-twenty might wish to spread its own wings, and could hardly be blamed for such an aspiration. Eileen was not the first girl nor, it may be feared, the last to be a prisoner, but since her parents were complacently satisfied that they had padded her prison-cell with all that a girl-at-home could require, there was nothing less likely than that they should think it their duty to unlock its door.

Mrs. Caulfield, being large and lethargic, was naturally an upholder of activity in others, and was at least active in providing what she was accustomed to call 'little errands' for her daughter.

'I want to ask the Ducarrigs to tea this afternoon, dear,' she said on that same close and heavy morning on which Dan had ridden to Eskragh. 'Don't you think it would be very nice if you paddled the boat to Monalour and asked them? And you might tell Dan to come too, to make up a four for tennis.'

'Dan won't be at home. This is the Board day,' said Eileen discouragingly. She thought it too hot for rowing.

'How tar'some!' said Mrs. Caulfield, settling herself comfortably in her armchair with her paper. 'I wonder Aunt Gina allows him to mix himself up with those people. And now you won't have enough for tennis, and your father *wants* exercise——'

Eileen looked at her mother, who was dismembering the *Morning Post*, and folding one fragment for her own delectation, with characteristic disregard of

its future. Her daughter resented her assumption that Dan was his mother's chattel. Why should he not be a District Councillor if he liked ! Should she say something scathing about public business being of less importance than her father's liver ? She decided to refrain. Pin-pricks were a mistake, and her mother had a slow way of bearing malice that Eileen respected. Besides, as a matter of fact, she agreed with her.

It was no more than a pull of twenty minutes or so to the old boat quay at Monalour from the Admiral's severely tidy boat-house that looked, in its white-washed decorum, as though a strayed seagull had perched at the end of the lawn. Eileen rowed an even, leisurely stroke ; the white punt kept what seemed an automatic course along the shore, avoiding the huge granite boulders that were strung out into the lake from the fir-tree-crested spike of Fairhaven Point ; swishing through the reed beds, slipping over the polished pavements of water-lily leaves that sank under her light keel and rose, undefeated, behind her stern as she slid onward. The water was like grey oil ; the dull purple reflection of the mountains at the far-away head of the lake was only broken by the double line of silver rings where the oars dipped ; the measured grunt of the rowlocks, and the light, slapping splash at the bows were the only sounds, save when a bugle-like note from a bullock, or the rattle of a cart from the road along the farther shore, came softly through the dead still air.

Eileen was not insensible to the delicate beauty of sight and sound through which she was passing, but its appeal went no farther than the ante-chamber of her senses. Her mind was flickering like a fire ; hopes, schemes, suspicions, fears, rising and falling,

sometimes flashing, definite as a flame, more often welling up almost formlessly, like billowing smoke.

The Monalour boat quay, once a well-ordered structure of hewn stone, was now a half-ruined relic of the time when the heavy boats, piled high with sods of turf, used to unload upon it their burdens for the Big House, and old Peter McLoughlen (father of Tom) would say to the rowers, gorgeously, that Them Above would have the full o' two boats burned while they, the rowers, would be crossing themselves. All this in the old days before the railway came, when coal was of a prohibitive price, and Peter McLoughlen, too proud to admit limitations of such unworthy nature where Monalour House was involved, was in the habit of saying that turf was a deal a handsomer thing about a gentleman's place than coal.

Eileen fastened the punt's painter to a rusty ring and climbed up by a breach in the weed-grown side of the quay. Indications of the present régime at Monalour were not wanting. A new boat was lying on the shore, glistening with fresh varnish ; two old garden-men were clearing the long walk from the lake to the house.

'That'll be a big job, Jerry,' said Eileen.

'It will, then, and no use afther,' replied the old man. 'Sure they all comes the near way across the grass always. But this new gintleman that's in it is very exact !'

'They don't like him,' thought Eileen, taking 'the near way' across the grass. 'Well, I like him better than her—but that's not saying much !'

Monalour was a large plain house, with a square high central block, and with two narrow wings that ran east and west at either end. A deep area surrounded

it. It stood, facing the sun and the lake, in the middle of a wide semicircle of trees and shrubs. In front of the house two broad terraces of mown grass were divided by a sunk fence from the Big Lawn, across which Eileen had come, one of which was devoted to lawn-tennis grounds, the other to croquet. Under the windows was a formal pattern of flower-beds, now resplendent with crudely brilliant masses of scarlet geraniums and begonias. The house was built of yellowish stone, which, on the wings, was thickly covered with rambler roses and climbing plants, but the central block was bare of all decoration, and in its severity suggested a stern father on whose either arm an over-dressed daughter was hanging. Three broad flights of worn limestone steps connected the terraces with one another. Two men and an old white horse were solemnly pacing to and fro with a mowing-machine as Eileen crossed the bridge over the sunk fence ; the smell of cut grass, the neatly raked gravel paths, the well-weeded flower-beds with their blaze of flowers, were for her symbols of civilisation and affluence—matters which her soul held in the deepest reverence of which it was capable.

‘ How nice it looks ! ’ she thought. ‘ It never looked nice, like this, in Uncle Henry’s time ; and Aunt Gina would never care whether it was tidy or no !—nor Dan either, I’m afraid ! Romantic utilitarians despise minor decencies ! That’s like a copy-book heading, but it means—— ’ She had not time to define to herself precisely the trend of the maxim, as she found herself confronted by Lord Ducarrig.

‘ My wife ? ’ he said, in response to Eileen’s inquiries. ‘ God knows where she is—I don’t. I seldom do. Can I take a message ? ’ He had a croquet

mallet in his hand and the balls were on the ground beside him. 'I'm afraid I don't play tennis, Miss Caulfield. My wife does, though; I'm much too old!'

His little eyes watched her from beneath the wide brim of a very new Panama straw hat. His pale grey flannels were in the bloom of their first youth. His red face was clean-shaved and trim, like the croquet lawns; there was something effective and impressive about his smartness no less than his eighteenth-century features.

Eileen was conscious of a challenge.

'I don't call that a good excuse!' she replied, with a laugh, and a swift glance that swept up from his snowy canvas shoes to his face, and joined itself for an instant with the gleam in his little blue eyes.

Ducarrig inserted his eyeglass into one of the small blue eyes and regarded Eileen through it with a deliberate admiration that deepened a little the bright colour in her cheeks. He was pleased with her for treating him as a combatant. An added touch of gallantry was perceptible in his manner, he cocked the Panama with a more rakish tilt.

Lady Ducarrig, just back from the show-ground with her patient, looked forth from the drawing-room windows and thence beheld a game of croquet progressing, with obvious success, between her husband and Miss Eileen Caulfield. She watched the game for a moment or two. Eileen was taking a steady aim at a ball half the ground away. The stroke succeeded.

'Shot!' exclaimed Ducarrig enthusiastically. He was standing with his back to the house, and, as Eileen followed her ball across the ground, Car saw one of the snowy shoes lightly touch Eileen's second

ball, so that it was no longer wired from the point at which she had arrived.

'He wants her to win!' she thought. He amused her by his inveteracy, and it has been said that she had something of special toleration for people who amused her. She never tolerated her husband more easily than when he was preoccupied with another woman (and it may be added that this factor in domestic harmony was not often lacking). She even spared him a little sympathy when she considered the fact of his marriage with her. 'He couldn't know what a Tartar he was catching!' she had thought dispassionately. But he, at all events, had alleviations; on the whole, she thought the Tartar had had the worst of it.

Dan lay stretched at full length on the old sofa in the drawing-room. It was, he believed, the only sofa in the world that was long enough to permit of his doing so. It alone, with its lifelong companion, the Spanish leather screen, of all the well-known furniture, had remained in its ancestral position. Dan felt something dream-like in the reversal of all the familiar conditions. He tried to remember where the things used to be, and his head began to spin. Not the least dream-like feature was the professional skill with which Lady Ducarrig bathed and dressed the wound on his forehead and bandaged the wrist that had been strained in the fall. His heart had steadied, but he felt very tired. Thinking was a bore. He abandoned responsibility, he closed his eyes, and for a few minutes took no thought for the day or the morrow.

When he opened them he found Lady Ducarrig sitting beside him; her finger was on his pulse.

'I think you're all right, and we won't bother about

the doctor. 'You've had quite a sleep.' She looked at him thoughtfully and began to laugh. 'Isn't your mother coming home to-night? She'll be delighted with your appearance—orange and green, the national colours!'

Lying helpless on the old sofa, submissively obeying orders, the hospital habit had been re-born in the patient. Lady Ducarrig was his nurse, and he had always had confidence in his nurses, and had chaffed them. But as repartee was not one of his gifts, he took refuge in a not unsuccessful imitation of the whining grumble of the afflicted warrior, and Eileen, coming into the room by the French window, heard, with considerable surprise, her cousin's voice addressing Lady Ducarrig as 'Sister,' and, in that relationship, adjuring her to give him 'a fag.'

To be overheard by a relative in a moment of expansion with one who does not come under that heading, is a test of self-possession that few are equal to. Car Ducarrig, epicure of the emotions of others, lost no shade of Dan's embarrassment, and listened to his grudging, halting account of the disaster with entire appreciation of the misery caused him by the recital. Eileen's response was all that a sympathetic cousin's should be. Dan wished that she were rather less effusive and dramatic in her sympathy. If it hadn't been for his wound, the toss itself, he thought angrily, wasn't worth talking about. It was idiotic to get excited about a thing of nothing that was all over. Lady Ducarrig, who had seen the whole business, had hardly said a word.

Lord Ducarrig, who had followed Eileen into the room, sat down and lit a cigarette, and awaited the end of the story with gentleman-like endurance. He

leaned back in his chair, his full eyelids half closed, but beneath them his eyes did not leave Eileen's slender figure, unless to move to the pink curve of her cheek and the small ear that showed through bright straying tendrils of hair. Lady Ducarrig might be an epicure of emotions, but her lord was interested in more tangible matters.

'I suppose all this is not incompatible with our having something to eat, Car?' he said blandly, as Eileen uttered what he rightly judged to be a concluding cry. 'Miss Caulfield and I have also spent an arduous morning, and she has been good enough to say she will stay for lunch. I needn't ask *you* to stay, Palliser!' he went on. 'It's a case of "no compulsion, only you must," eh? My wife has made that clear, no doubt. She's a person who likes her own way, even though sometimes, like the rest of us, she has to do without it!'

'I should be very ungrateful if I didn't do what Lady Ducarrig wished,' said Dan gruffly.

'Mr. Palliser has acquired quite the right spirit, hasn't he, Car?' went on Ducarrig, putting his big head on one shoulder, and smiling at his wife. 'You've had a more rapid success with him than with me!'

'It seems like it, doesn't it?' said Car coolly, taking off her hat and arranging her hair at a mirror as she spoke. 'There's the gong. The obedient Mr. Palliser is to stay where he is! He will be sent in what is good for him, and he is forbidden to move!'

Dan lay quiet on the old sofa, and meditated a little about the smile with which Ducarrig had looked at his wife. He thought it was rather a beastly smile. He didn't like old Ducarrig. He had never taken to

him, as most of the people in the country had ; he was quite clear about it now. . . .

Car Ducarrig was a young woman who was accustomed to the position of being fallen in love with. This is not necessarily, or even usually, a passive position, and, as a rule, it implies some responsive exertions, but Car's experience had been otherwise. Many, both of men and women, had fallen before her, and, more often than not, the initiating feature of their overthrow had been Car's dilettante interest in human beings. No one can regard him or herself as a specimen, a mere example of a type, and trouble had not seldom resulted from the subject's discovery that this was the angle from which he or she was being observed. She had cultivated indifference of manner and hardness of heart, yet when they were most needed they were apt to fail her, betrayed by imagination and reckless good-nature. It was enough for an adoring girl to be poor, and reasonably pleasant, for Car to fling her own expensive clothes at her, asserting that they were worn out, to contrive entertainments for her benefit, to further her cause in any way that it might be accomplished. Enough for a worshipping youth to make her his confidante in a love-affair, for her to put forth her strength in schemes and manœuvres on his behalf, that ended, but too often, in the discovery that her efforts had been in vain, since her *protégé* had transferred his affections from his original nomination to herself. Intensely susceptible to good looks in others, and sufficiently interested in her own, Car was yet prone to forget the peril that beset her friends. Armed as she was at most points, and ever ready for action, her own charm was a weapon whose weight she had more than once underestimated.

CHAPTER XII

MRS. PALLISER'S return to her home after a period of absence was not infrequently marked by an attack of what might, without exaggeration, be termed dissatisfaction with its conditions. Those kindly scales with which custom dims our eyes to domestic shortcomings are but too apt to find a solvent in a change of scene ; it is not the absent who are always in the wrong, but those who have stayed at home.

Dan came down stiffly, late for breakfast, conscious of a bruised shoulder, a black eye, and a large prismatic bump on his forehead, and found that so far from receiving sympathy for these injuries, they were to be brought up in judgment against him. How could he have been so foolish ? Surely he might have found something better to do at home ? . . . The housemaid might be in tears, sweeping the stairs all over again, and the parlour-maid in tears, repolishing the silver, and Dan, in concentrated sulk, might be set down to a cold breakfast ; but it is at least arguable that unfortunate Mrs. Palliser, with eyes sharpened by the perfections of other households, and a temper barbed by gout, did not suffer as much as any of them.

Peggy, a coward, and afflicted—not without cause—by a chronic conviction of sin, as well as by a super-subtle perception of mood in those in authority over her, lay, a lump of more than Egyptian darkness, afar under the sideboard, with eyes that some trick of light had turned to rubies, fixed on the mistress of the house.

Lizzie, wearing a bleakly devil-may-care air, sat erect on the grass outside the window, aloof from all things earthly. Mrs. Palliser, who had eaten no breakfast, occupied herself, during Dan's repast, in dusting the chimney-piece with her pocket handkerchief, as an act of general protest, until a small china ornament fell into the fender, a victim to her zeal, when she strode from the room and violently rang the bell for prayers.

Tara, the young chestnut mare, no less than her rider, found herself disinclined for exertion this morning. She came lame out of her stable, and the point of her near shoulder and both knees were full. Dan sat on a window-sill while she was jogged up and down for his inspection. He found himself here, also, in disgrace.

'She'll be all right in a day or two, Heskin,' he said; a remark that, in its implied apology, was a tactical error.

'If you might have left her inside, sir, until I had another two days given her with the rope, it mightn't have happened her at all,' replied Heskin, who was a little man of unknown age, with dyed hair, and that belief in his own omniscience that is the enviable endowment of all respectable grooms.

'It certainly wouldn't have happened to her if she hadn't gone out!' said Dan incontrovertibly; he said to himself that he was getting fed up with disapproval. 'As soon as she's fit,' he went on, 'you can take her out and rope her over fences again. She must have plenty of it. I'm going to jump her at the Show!'

Shock temporarily deprived Heskin of the power of speech, and before he had recovered utterance a

maid-servant fluttered into the yard and summoned Dan to his mother's presence. As he followed her to the house, he heard Heskin's opening remonstrances falling dead on the empty air. It was the first moment of satisfaction he had known that day.

Mrs. Palliser was sitting at her writing-table in the drawing-room. She eyed Dan fixedly as he came in and stood, facing her, leaning against the piano. The expression on her strong face, so like his, but for wanting the hint of ideality that was in his eyes, was at this moment one of indecision, almost of wistfulness. This child, this boy whom she had brought into the world, and governed, and guided, was now a man, incalculable, sphered, as every human creature inevitably is, in his own self-ness. She felt this dumbly, almost unconsciously ; the knowledge lit her mind as a room may be lighted by an unseen light, and revealed to her, without her knowing it, her limitations. Unintrospective as she was, she knew that she had been what she would have called 'put out' that morning, and there was something pathetic in her effort to infuse geniality into her voice when she spoke to her son.

'Dan,' she began, 'there are a great many things I want to talk to you about. I must get at them by degrees, but there's one thing I promised Uncle Dick I would discuss with you as soon as I got home—'

She paused and began to straighten her pen tray, her ink bottle, her neatly banded packets of letters and bills ; she moved them absently, and yet with emphasis, putting each down firmly and in due relation to the others. Dan waited, wondering. His mother was not wont to hesitate if she had anything to say.

Mrs. Palliser cleared her throat, and moistened her lips. Then, abruptly, she pushed away the various

things she had so meticulously arranged, and leaning back in her chair, she looked straight at her son.

'Dan,' she began again, 'while I've been away I've had several letters from your Uncle Dick on a subject that he and I had already talked about, and now I want to speak to you about it.'

('What on earth?—why on earth?—Uncle Dick—?' Dan's thoughts rose and broke, quickly, fruitlessly, like bubbles.)

His mother went on rather hurriedly. 'Uncle Dick thinks, very naturally, about Eileen's future. The others have married well, and are provided for, but Eileen—' She had a pencil in her hand, and had tapped off each sentence with it, as if to emphasise it, but now she checked herself, and looked anxiously, almost entreatingly, at Dan. The morning sun, flooding in through a high, open window, could discover hardly a grey hair in the smooth, dark masses of her hair, but her age was confessed in the channels that life, lived without illusion or romance, had delved in her narrow forehead and down her long haggard cheeks.

'Well?' said Dan suspiciously. (What was she driving at? It wasn't like his mother to beat about the bush.)

'Well,' repeated his mother, unconsciously hardening her voice to give herself confidence, 'Uncle Dick says—and I agree with him—' she hummed and mouthed, marking time, while she tried to find formulæ that should present her facts attractively. 'We think, in fact, that if you and Eileen—in fact, my dear boy, it's time for you to think of marrying, and—no, wait, hear me out—' she raised her voice dictatorially, and rushed out the words as Dan flung himself erect out

of his lounging attitude ; ‘ Uncle Dick will settle a very good fortune on her ; he said ten thousand, which is very handsome indeed—but he would like to see her happily settled near him, and he likes you, and I like her—’

Dan had got very red. As an idea the proposition was not a novel one to him. He had before now envisaged it, and without the distaste that he was aware of now. But the liberty taken in making the suggestion to him filled him with a deep anger.

‘ I should have said it would be more to the point if Eileen liked me, or I her ! I should have thought that that might be considered as a feature of the show, anyhow ! I don’t quite see where *we* come in ! ’ he began, stormily, gathering rage as he went on. ‘ I call it a pretty brutal suggestion—fairly crude ! You and Uncle Dick might be a couple of dog-fanciers—’

His mother’s temper was quick to catch fire from his.

‘ Don’t speak to me like that ! ’ she flashed at him, as if he were seven years old ; then, checking herself with a laboured effort of diplomacy, she said, in a quieter voice : ‘ Now, my dear Dan, take time—don’t be in a hurry—think it over. You know you and Eileen have always been friends. Nothing definite need be said or done at present, not till we get Monalour back into our own hands again, but if—if any sort of *definite* arrangement were come to, Uncle Dick said something about advancing you some money—a sort of a loan—so that you needn’t be hampered in your farming, he knows you want to buy cattle—and just think what that mightn’t enable you to do ! ’

Dan shook his head like a restive horse, and was about to speak.

'No! I don't wish you to give any answer now,' Mrs. Palliser went on quickly. 'One must think over these things. We might both of us say something we might regret!' she added, with an unaccustomed effort of constructive imagination.

She was standing up; she had lost, if she had ever possessed it, the art of caressing, yet she felt a half-atrophied impulse to caress her son, to assure him she was only speaking for his good. Her effort of imagination did not carry her far enough to show her that in offending his taste she had done herself fatal injury, but she knew he was very angry. She laid her clumsy, gouty hand on his arm, and looked searchingly in his face.

'Think it over, there's no hurry,' was all she could say, dumbed by her northern habit of reticence. 'Now I'm going to feed my chickens!'

She tramped out of the room, and Dan remained standing very straight by the piano, dark and dour in his anger.

Poor Mrs. Palliser! Incapable of realising that the positions had been reversed, that it was now for her to knock at the door of the younger generation and to find that it was locked and barred against her.

CHAPTER XIII

FATHER HUGH MACNAMARA had been holding a 'station' at a farmhouse down in the broad Vale of Esker, below the town of Eskragh. The 'station,' which is a weekday gathering together for a celebration of the Mass, was over. The congregation had dispersed, and Father Hugh had finished his breakfast, and was sitting in the farmhouse parlour, talking to his host. The farmhouse was a large one, and its accompanying land was as good as the best in that wide, rich valley, which is much as if one said the best in Ireland. A tall, slender young woman came and went, removing the breakfast things that covered the parlour table. The farmer, a small man of about forty, with a big head and a thick growth of dark red hair, sat near the fireplace, smoking, and talking to the priest. The room in which they sat was small and low-ceiled, but a wide-open casement window let in the morning sun, and with the sunshine entered also a light breath of west wind that fluttered like a butterfly among the many papers on the writing-table under the window, and caught away the thin tobacco smoke from Eugene Cashen's pipe.

Father Hugh was not smoking. His peering blue eyes were fixed upon a cupboard, through whose glass doors several shelves full of books could be seen.

' You have a nice little lot of books there, Eugene,' he said, putting on his spectacles. ' I'll be coming borrowing from you one of these days ! '

' You'll be welcome indeed, but I'm afraid you'll be telling me there's a dose of poetry there ! ' said Eugene Cashen apologetically. ' But maybe you're like myself, and have a fancy for it. Anyway, take anything you like ; the rest of what books are there are mostly on the one subject, and that's history—Irish history, I should say.'

' You needn't tell me that ! Don't I see the green and gold uniform on the bulk of them ! Indeed, I'd like well to have a look at some o' them ! '

' There's a book of me own there,' Eugene Cashen said diffidently, ' a sort of a manual of the language—if it wasn't putting too much trouble on you to read it, I'd be glad of your opinion on it.'

' I'll be only delighted ! ' said Father Hugh politely ; ' but ah ! you know, I hadn't the luck to be born in an Irish-speaking district. The little Irish I have I picked it up by ear. I couldn't read it at all. It's the most I can do to read "*A chara*" at the beginning of your letters to me, Eugene ! '

' Well, no matter ; be going on learning a little always, and in the latter end you'll be surprised what you know ! I sucked it in with my mother's milk, thank God ! And when I used to be going round the country that time I was inspecting for the Congested Districts Board, I found there was more people knew it a little than I thought.'

' There's a gentleman I know,' said the priest, ' he lives the other side of the mountain—but you'll know his name, Mr. Dan Palliser. He was talking to me not long since about the Irish, and how he wished he knew it. He's a very nice young man. Indeed, Eugene, I should tell you, I made so bold as to write to him and tell him I'd be here at your

place to-day, and to ask him would he meet me here ; but I don't know will he come——'

' I'll be glad to see any friend of yours, Father, and I hope he'll come too. It isn't long since he sent me some pamphlets on Co-operation. But sure, what can *I* do ! I'm no better than an outlaw ! '

Father Hugh looked at a gun that was standing in a corner of the room.

' Maybe that's why you're the only man I know who can keep *that* in his house ! ' he said, smiling at Eugene Cashen.

' My friends spared it to me ! '

' Well, but how about the police ? Why don't they take it ? '

' I'm told they have a warrant out against me, and strict orders to keep the telescope to the blind eye and not see me ! I think I'm safe enough from them. I believe they have a notion I'm keeping the country quiet.'

' And so you are too ! ' said the young priest, looking at him with admiration ; ' sure that's well known ! '

' God knows I do my best,' said Eugene Cashen.

They sat silent for awhile. Father Hugh's eyes recurred to the bookshelves, and he found himself no longer able to resist their attraction. He rose softly, and drawing forth one of the books, put his nose into it, and holding it, after the manner of the short-sighted, at a distance of two inches from his face, began to read it with one eye.

Eugene Cashen ran his thin, wiry fingers through his red hair, and leaned back in his chair and stared out of the window at the swallows that were swirling and flashing in the bright air.

' It's early yet, but you'd nearly say those lads

were readying themselves to be off already. They've had enough of Ireland, maybe ! ' he muttered, as if he were speaking to himself. ' I wonder where will we all be by the time they come back again ! We might do better if we went away with them, after all ! I'm sick of it all ! Bloodshed, and burning, and going from bad to worse ! '

' Have done, Eugene ! ' The tall girl had come into the room, carrying a tray of glasses in her small hands, moving so smoothly that they made no sound, holding her small head serenely high. ' What nonsense is this you have ! Is it leave the farm ? ' She turned to the priest : ' Father, scold him now for a fool ! '

Eugene Cashen looked with a smile that was sadder than tears from his sister to the priest.

' A fool is what I am. You're right enough there, Abbie ! And there's more like me, and ever will be as long as—as Ireland's out of joint ! What is it Shakespeare says ?—“ O curséd spite, that ever I was born to set it right ! ” '

He rolled out the quotation in his strong brogue, and the pleasure in his own culture that is part of the hard-earned reward of the self-educated man brought some brightness to his face.

' Well now, don't be doing too much to set it right ! ' said Father Hugh, ' or you'll set yourself wrong ! There's a new District Inspector of Police come to the town, and he's cross enough ! Not like the last poor decent man. Take care would the eye behind the telescope not be so blind at all ! They say old Nicholas Coyne's very great with him——'

' And that's no credit ! ' said Eugene Cashen, the brightness fading from his look.

He had a plain face, overweighted by a forehead big and bumpy as a knee, that ran back, far over the turn of the head, between upstanding hedges of thick hair ; his eyebrows were high at the temples and dropped sharply to the centre, meeting across his nose. Deep in under them were brilliant, light, grey-green eyes. Those who first met him saw only the forehead and the eyes ; later, possibly, an insignificant nose, and a big mouth shaded by a bristling reddish grey moustache, became apparent, but the eyes were like a candle flashed in a dark place ; nothing else counted.

He stood up and knocked the ashes out of his pipe into the little fireplace, which was filled by one of those paralysed waterfalls in green and white cut paper, that seem to be specially dedicated to small parlours.

' It's the levity,' he said, nodding his head, his restless hands in his pockets, his bright eyes looking in front of him, as if they were seeing through the opposite wall and the engraving of the murder of Lord Edward Fitzgerald that hung on it. ' The mixture of levity and brutality in the people that breaks my heart. There was a member of the Bridane District Council I met the other day, and he told me how the best part of the council were arrested and in prison, and there wasn't enough o' them left to form a quorum ! Screeching with laughter he was ! And the clerk was arrested, too, and so, at the last meeting they had, they passed a resolution to give him an " indefinite holiday," because he was sentenced to a year in jail ! They were delighted with themselves ! " That was a score over the Government !" says the fellow ! And all the business of the Board in chaos ! Much they care about that ! And they call me a crank because I try to get some business done, and I'm against this damnable murdering police-

men in cold blood ! They say that's because I've a brother a policeman—as if, if I thought it'd be for the good of Ireland, I wouldn't shoot myself, and my brother too, to-morrow, and be glad to do it ! '

Father Hugh, who had been reading with one eye, while he listened with one ear, lowered the book from his face and said reprovingly, 'No, no, Eugene, don't say that !'

' And what would ye do to your sister ? ' said Abbie, the tall girl, laughing, looking at him with the delightful glance of mingled pity, admiration, love, and amusement that some women can bestow on some men. She was little more than half her brother's age, and her only outward mark of kinship with him were her eyes, luminous as his, but deep-lidded, and set beneath a high, tranquil forehead. Her black hair was parted in the middle. The beauty of her features, the straight nose, the small mouth, and the oval line of her face, was discounted by its want of originality. She might have been the model for nine out of ten sacred pictures. With such a face it was even incredibly inappropriate that her fate should have been joined with the stormy one of an advanced revolutionary ; it was as though her future had been irrevocably fixed ; she looked predestined to be the Bride of Heaven.

Distasteful as was the thought to her brother, it was possibly in his mind when he answered her.

' I'd say, "get thee to a Nunnery" and pray for my soul ! For I'd be in the want of prayers, I suppose, if it had come to that ! ' returned Eugene Cashen, with a grin on his ugly mouth at his own inconsistency, and a quick response in his eyes to the affection in Abbie's look.

He adored her common sense ; he leaned on it,

and knew, though only half consciously, that the ship in which they were together sailing through wild and uncharted seas was ballasted by her.

Through the open window the drumming of an engine came to their ears. Father Hugh started, and laid down his book. ‘That’s a motor-bike !’ he said eagerly, ‘I wouldn’t wonder if——’ While he spoke the sound deepened, and the next moment that least lovely and most undignified of all means of locomotion, the ‘motor-bike,’ could be seen, looking like a giant runaway toy, speeding along the cart-road that led from the high road across a field to the farmhouse.

Dan, in his voluminous overalls, seemed to fill the parlour as he came in, stooping in the low doorway, and having but little to spare between his head and the ceiling. Father Hugh’s pride and satisfaction in his arrival cleared for a moment the anxious lines from his forehead, and the strained look left his eyes.

‘Now, isn’t this very nice,’ he said, smiling at his friends; ‘I’m proud that I have the honour of making ye known to one another ! Mr. Palliser, this is Miss Abina Cashen, and this is her brother, Eugene, and I’ll promise you you’ll find warm sympathisers in them for all your schemes for the good of poor old Ireland !’

‘You’re safe in promising Mr. Palliser that, Father,’ said Eugene Cashen, while Dan, extracting from his pockets bundles of papers, proceeded to spread them out on the table.

‘I’m a firm believer in the advantages of what Mr. Palliser is advocating,’ went on Eugene Cashen, ‘but I’m thinking that the way things are now, these are only palliatives. If there’s a deep-seated bullet in me, it’s the doctor’s knife I want to get it out, not a poultice !’

'Ah, but there's a fine pull in a good poultice too,' said Father Hugh cheerfully; 'it might draw out your bullet for you, Eugene, as well as the knife! Look at this unfortunate country! It's the knife they've used to cut her into two halves, and a poultice might have been better after all!'

'But why shouldn't those halves join up again? I don't believe the "clean cut" has gone too deep for that,' said Dan combatively. 'East and West must join somewhere, no matter what Mr. Kipling says! and isn't the same true of North and South? We can't do without Ulster, and she'll find out the same about us some day!'

Eugene Cashen stood up and looked from Dan's dark, keen face to the priest's pallid one. Then he looked at his sister, who was standing near the door. Her delicate beauty, the spirituality of her expression, seemed to him to typify that Ireland to whose service he had vowed himself, purely, without thought of gain or reward. He turned to Dan again, and said hotly:

'When I think of that Act of an English Parliament that is being forced on us now, there's only one title I'd give it—"Mangling done here!" Before God, Mr. Palliser, I'd as soon give my sister's body to be cut up in a dissecting-room as consent to such an Act as that!' The green flame in his light eyes was concentrated on Dan's face.

Father Hugh fidgetted and said nervously, 'There, there, Eugene! Mr. Palliser had neither part nor lot in it, anyhow!'

'I know that well enough,' said Eugene Cashen sombrely, and fell silent.

Then, almost as if he were delivering a prepared lecture, he began to speak, slowly and with depression

at first, but gathering heat and speed as he went on. He tracked the course of Irish history, and of English relations with Ireland, since ever they began, ‘to Ireland’s sorrow, to England’s shame !’ he said. It was the note of his discourse.

Dan listened with an interest that was not the less deep for the fact that he knew there was generally something to be said on both sides of most subjects. But Eugene Cashen, handicapped by the singleness of his own soul, steeped in an embittered literature that recognised but one point of view, and stirred by the presence of a possible convert in a man of another class, felt as St. Paul might have felt in the presence of King Agrippa, and released his stormy soul in a torrent of complaint and despair.

In the high and flexible voice that had, in much public speaking, earned for him his nickname of ‘Eugene-the-Talk,’ he spoke of Ireland. A country beaten to the earth, yet unconquered ; a people fooled and exploited ; the very loyalty that they had learned to give to one English king made the pretext for their destruction by another. Sorrow and shame, fierce rebellion, and brutal suppression ; successive ‘plantations’ of soldier-settlers, whose sole, yet sufficient, claim to the inheritance of others was ‘the necessity of the Crown, that had used them to do its dirty work, to stop their mouths, and pay them their wages with what cost it nothing ! Nothing but a few more widows and orphans ! A few more exiles !’ cried Eugene Cashen in his wild tenor voice that was like a winter wind. ‘Governors who betrayed the authority confided to them to pillage the helpless, who betrayed even their own settlers for the bribes of new adventurers ! They came,’ declared Eugene-

the-Talk, flinging out his thin hand, ‘like raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame ! Wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever !’

He flung himself down into his chair, and sat with his clenched fists on his knees, staring sightlessly at the frozen waterfall of white and green.

Abbie was the first to speak.

‘Eugene,’ she said, looking nervously at him, ‘would I make a little tea ? The gentleman came a long way, and the morning’s very close.’

Her brother looked at her as if he had not heard what she said ; then he gave a long sigh that was half a groan ; it was almost like the first long breath that follows the awakening from an anæsthetic.

‘What d’ye say, Abbie ? Oh, tea, is it ? Yes, gerr’l, to be sure. Get it, my dear !’— He turned to Dan. ‘This is a temperance house, Mr. Palliser. You’ll excuse us offering you no more than tea—Temperance is a plank in our platform, you know !’

He wiped his forehead with his pocket-handkerchief.

‘I ought to apologise for preaching at you—tub-thumping indeed it was—you know what name they have for me—“Eugene-the-Talk !” I feel distracted sometimes, I hardly know what I’m doing or saying.’

‘I’m no politician,’ said Dan, ‘and no historian, either. I’ve tried to keep out of that sort of thing. I see no use in going over old grievances that are past and done with.’

The door burst open and Abbie Cashen rushed in.

‘Eugene ! Eugene ! There are policemen coming up the road to the door !’

The three men started to their feet. Through the open window they saw an ordered body of tall dark

figures advancing steadily up the cart-road. They swung along, marching in step ; little sparks of sunshine danced on the rifles they were carrying. The priest and Dan saw Eugene Cashen's eyes turn to the corner where the gun stood.

'No, Eugene ! For God's sake let that alone !' said Father Hugh hoarsely. 'Couldn't you hide ? Or —quick ! There's the motor-bike ! Couldn't you——'

Dan also had thought of the 'motor-bike.' All the Irish blood in him asserting itself inevitably, irresistibly, on the side of the man 'wanted' by the law. He reached the door in two strides.

'Take it if you like !' he called to Eugene Cashen, 'it's round at the back.'

He went out of the house. He did not consider it was his business to interfere between Eugene Cashen and the police, whatever their business might be. As he crossed the narrow strip of garden between the house and the field, he saw, over the hedge, a policeman already wheeling the motor-bicycle round from the back of the house. That new District Inspector, of whom Father Hugh had said that his eye 'behind the telescope mightn't be so blind at all,' had provided for such a contingency as escape from the rear. At the little gate that led into the field Dan met four of the party that they had seen on the cart-road, with the officer in charge. He realised that the others were guarding the other side of the house. Dan was a magistrate, and the men knew him, and saluted as they passed him. Their officer, newly come to the district, stared hard at him. Dan saw him speak to one of the men, turning round and looking back as he did so, before he entered the house with them.

CHAPTER XIV

THE Eskragh Agricultural Show was always something of a financial anxiety to its promoters. Its popularity with the farmers, on whom its success depended, was precariously linked with the generosity of its Prize List, and its very solvency was at the mercy of the weather, a fine day or a wet one involving, in their effect upon the 'Gate,' either triumph or bankruptcy. It was therefore the prudent practice of those who directed its fortunes to collect all possible preliminary assistance from the general public, and two of the Society's most prominent members, Mr. Nicholas Coyne and Mr. James Ryan, were renowned alike for their persuasiveness and for their pertinacity in the extraction of subscriptions. Consequently it occurred very frequently that, welded into one, under the title of a Deputation, they were together sent forth on begging expeditions for whatever committee was in want of funds, and was privileged in possessing the right of exacting their services.

These things being so, it will easily be understood that the extortion of money for prizes, and of promise of Challenge Cups, and the like, for the Annual Agricultural Show, was a task that fell, unquestioningly, to them ; and this was how it was that to Lord Ducarrig, reading *The Times* over his after-breakfast cigar (authoritatively, and with that air of the Censor that so well becomes a bald head and an expanding waistcoat), Messrs. Ryan and Coyne were presented

by his butler, under the non-committal, and not eminently descriptive, title of 'Two Gentlemen from Eskragh.'

Lord Ducarrig laid aside *The Times*, and, resuming the benevolently autocratic manner of the Governor of Santa Caterina, inquired of the gentlemen what he could do for them.

With this encouragement, Messrs. Coyne and Ryan advanced upon their mission as by a well-trodden path. They spoke antiphonally of the promotion of agriculture, of the need of encouragement for the struggling farmer, of the troubles with which he had to cope, and, generally, of how much he had to contend with in the domestic effort, described feelingly by Mr. Coyne, as 'Rareing long, little families.' Further, they hymned the monetary and social advantages to the town of Eskragh in all their moods and tenses ; what Mr. Coyne omitted, Mr. Ryan supplied ; all was balanced, temperate, moving, and harmonious.

Lord Ducarrig responded with equal propriety and regard for ritual. A cheque, a large one, was written : cigars were proffered, the bell was rung for whisky and soda water ; the Deputation, feeling that here was a nobleman indeed, fell to general yet courtly conversation.

'Ye never heard the like o' the talk the old Baby put out of himself !' said Mr. Ryan, recounting the events of the interview to his wife ; 'sure the whisky made him very loose in himself entirely. He had the lord in splits listening to him and all the old stories he had ! And in the finish of it, didn't he draw up the coal contract to him ! He did, faith ! And knock an order for fifteen ton out of him too ! And saying that coal the like o' his never crossed the sea before,

but that for all that, it was only Mr. Dan's one vote got him the contract ! " That was a dam' close call, Mr. Coyne ! " says the lord ; " ye owe Mr. Palliser a good turn for that ! " he says. " Well, me lord," says the old laddo, " sure it was I got him his seat on the Board," says he, " and wasn't that the good turn I done him ? One good turn deserves another ! " he says. " Sure, didn't I hear him say the very same to Mr. Dan, and poor Mr. Dan not knowing from Adam what did he mean ! But the lord knew fast enough, I can tell you ! "

' Well, well,' answered Mrs. Ryan rather abstractedly, having just heard the summons of a hen, and mistrusting the probity of Jimmy's new collie pup in the matter of eggs.

Brilliant, from Mr. Coyne's point of view, as was the result of the deputation, both in its public and its private capacities, it is possible that had he realised his success as a *raconteur* he would have been still more gratified. Among Lord Ducarrig's merits as an administrator had been the allied gifts of being able to listen attentively, and to remember what he heard. On due reflection he considered that the cheque, and the accompanying attentions, had not been ill expended.

Dan Palliser, in his exalted position as President of the Agricultural Society, did not join in the activities of the collectors, but in more general energy of a missionary type he rivalled their efforts. It is one of the many paradoxes that have been recorded of Ireland, that during the greater part of the wild and distracted year now under consideration, a condition that was tantamount to civil war was able to exist in many places, without interfering with, or even affecting the everyday life of very many of her people.

Even though the district of which Eskragh was the centre was less 'disturbed' than others, there were not many days of that summer, and still fewer nights, when the peace that seemed to hold it was not broken; when the glory of the summer mornings was not smirched by the smoke of fires, outward and visible signs of inner fires of hatred, and the short stillness of the summer nights shattered by the hard, inhuman clamour of shots. And yet Dan, and many more also, went unmolested about their business at home and abroad, and fairs and markets were held in amity, and even the soldiers, who had been sent to intimidate Eskragh, found that the fabled Union of Hearts was a less remote possibility than they had been given to understand, as far, at least, as many of the younger daughters of the town were concerned. It was a time of bewilderment, fruitful of exaggerations, lies, and rumours; but Dan, ever an optimist where Ireland was concerned, held hopefully to his doctrine of Speeding the Plough, and of building up a prosperity that should smother, as with a deep and comfortable feather-bed, rebellion and discontent.

Nowhere, however, more than on his own land, had rebellion (of, however, a milder and more domestic variety) prospered, and that son of Cromwellian swashbucklers, Tom McLoughlen, was the leader of its forces. The fate of the tractor, that Dan had pledged himself to buy, had not differed in any very important particular from that prophesied for it by Mr. Ryan. It had come, fitfully, from the station, in a fashion more suggestive of a crippled kangaroo than of a respectable farm-engine under its own steam; and having, with uncertainties that finally merged into a single unconquerable sulk, arrived within two

miles of its destination, it had ended its journey, ignominiously, at the tails of those ancient and out-of-date animals that it was designed to supplant. No sentiments of delicacy or of magnanimity interfered with Tom McLoughlen's enjoyment of this *début*. It may, indeed, be taken as an axiom that in dealings with such as he no quarter will be shown, and none should be given. To refrain from the savage triumph that finds expression in impressing upon the adversary a fact of which he is already bitterly aware, is regarded in certain social circles as an indication of either stupidity, cowardice, or forgetfulness, never of generosity. 'Look at that now!' Tom McLoughlen and Jimmy Ryan would sing in chorus. 'What did we say to ye! What did we tell ye——!'

Dan convened to the opening meet of the steam-tractor all his world—the District Council, the Farmers' Society, and such of his own class as remained in a countryside that had almost daily to view its 'gentry-houses' being left derelict, or sold out of that station in life into which, as the Catechism says, it had pleased God to call them. Even though Mrs. Palliser's social attitude was not distinguished for its geniality, lack of hospitality had never been laid to her charge, and the preparation of food on a large scale appealed to some ancestral strain of munificence that was latent in her. And not alone for this reason did she abet Dan in his projected entertainment. Her recent interview with him had so far been productive of nothing except an added reserve on his part, an unwonted discomposure, and an anxiety that she could not repress, on her own. Therefore, regarding a lunch to the universe, in honour of the steam-tractor, as being in the nature of a peace-offering, Mrs. Palliser did not spare herself in its

preparation, and, unlike Messrs. Ryan and McLoughlen, did not even hint that the manner of the tractor's arrival had been preordained, and was no more than the fulfilment of prophecy.

With the confidence that is born of an optimistic temperament, the day of the display had been fixed by Dan for that following the arrival of the machine. The end of July is not a time when much reliance can be placed on southern Irish weather, and the best that could be said of the prospects for the day was Tom McLoughlen's greeting to Dan.

'I rose when it was making day, and says I to meself, "There's rain on it!" but I'm thinking now that 'twill shtagger on till th' evening.'

Dan's guests, however, were not of the kind to be discouraged by dubieties of this nature. By eleven o'clock the big farmyard up at the back of Monalour House was already full of traps and carts of every description, as well as with such few motor-cars as had been privileged to receive police-permits, and were therefore able to take the road. The cow-stalls were full of saddle-horses ; it was plain that there was no lack of interest in young Mr. Palliser's new enterprise.

The tractor was not to enter upon its labours until twelve o'clock, but the waiting interval was abundantly filled with conversation, and with the leisurely and agreeable inspection of all that Dan's farmyard had to offer. Groups of farmers, comfortable middle-aged men, in their Sunday clothes, strolled from one attraction to another, squired by Dan, or his subordinates, full of loud-voiced praise and secret criticism.

'That's my young bull, Mr. Casey ! Pure-bred Friesian, half "Imported-blood." What d'ye think of him ? '

'A grand baste, a grand baste altogether !' says Mr. Casey weightily ; 'he's as handsome as a dog ! It was from England you got him I'll go bail ! Ah-ha ! 'T isn't easy to buy the likes of him ! Ye'll not get *him* in the fair of Eskragh !' Mr. Casey was silent for a moment while he gazed in dramatic admiration at the bull-calf. 'Sure the last fair that was in it there was nothing at all there ! Ugly, rakish cattle, very hungry ! I couldn't buy but two little stores, and if ye gave me Ireland's crown I couldn't put meat on them.'

'I don't know who'll give ye that, Mr. Casey !' said another of Dan's convoy, a young farmer who passed as being something of a humorist. 'It's in funny hands now, and if ye had it itself, no one'd give ye five shillings for it--no, nor half a crown neither !'

'God knows I don't want it !' said Mr. Casey, rather scandalised at an old and trusted figure of speech being wrested to facetious and political uses by young Mr. Adams, who had been in the War and didn't care what he said, as everybody knew. 'God knows all I want is to be left quiet !'

'It's little the Sinn Feiners 'll leave you quiet if they want anything you can give them !' mocked Mr. Adams, casting a look over his shoulder, dashing though he was, to see who was within hearing. 'Those lads, that are on the run now, are going from one house to another every night, eating all before them ! They went to old Owen Begley's three nights ago, and two sides of pork they ate on him, and the world and all of bread and butter and tea ! They had Mrs. Begley up all night cooking for them ! It'd do anyone good to hear Owen talking about them ! He wouldn't be satisfied to be sittin' down, but he should stand up to be cursin' them !'

' Oh, oh, oh ! ' said Mr. Casey, much moved, as was evidenced by his frightened eyes, but none the less anxious to change the conversation. ' D'ye know now, Mr. Palliser, if ye'll believe me, meself had a cow one time that was a black-and-white breed, but it was a Hollo-steen they called her, and a good cow she was too. Ye'd be tired milking her ! '

' Isn't that what the man said that was sellin' the parson's old cow and wouldn't be let tell a lie ! ' said the flippant Mr. Adams. ' " Anny one'd be tired milkin' her ! " says the fella, and it was true enough for him, for she never had a drop at all ! '

The task of the propagandist is a difficult and often an ungrateful one, but Dan could not but feel that such an opportunity as the present for pressing his theories and his pamphlets upon his neighbours might never recur. Sparing neither himself nor them, he went from group to group preaching his gospel of salvation, undeterred by the atmosphere, undefined, yet unmistakable, of waiting, of apprehension, of uncertainty, and of unwillingness to take thought for the morrow, that pervaded his guests. Pleasant, well-mannered, and apparently responsive, as were all to whom he spoke, Dan was aware of something tense, expectant, and strained, as of men in a besieged city, a city that is besieged by two rival armies and is ready to capitulate to either, but is uncertain with which of them safety lies. Men talked in lowered voices, looking over their shoulders, as young Adams had done. Conversations that had begun loudly and cheerfully with the weather and the price of pigs, would fall into murmurs of which Dan knew only that the deeds of those rival besiegers were being discussed, but with what bias he, or such as he, would never

truly know. He and his like were kept outside. Dan knew that, and knew too, badly as the knowledge hurt him, that though none ever brought more single hearts than such as he to the helping of Ireland, he, and those like him, must submit and stand outside. Even to-day, beneath his preoccupation in other things, he felt that something special was known, and was being hidden from him. Men had put what he felt to be tentative questions to him, as if to see how much he knew of something—he couldn't guess what. Once he had seen a man, whom he did not know, look hard at him, and heard him say something quickly, that might have been the words 'Eugene-the-Talk'; and once, as he was joining a group who were speaking together so earnestly that his approach was unnoticed, he again heard the words 'Eugene-the-Talk,' and then one of the men said, 'God help Patsey Curtin!' But Dan knew better than to attempt to force their confidence.

Yet, in spite of all, his projects prospered. By twelve o'clock his note-book was full of names and of definite and specified promises of help. His Milk Recording Society, and his Co-operative Store and Creamery, began to incarnate and to breathe the breath of life. He felt he could look Jimmy Ryan in the face, even snap his fingers as well as look. He saw Lady Ducarrig sauntering between the waiting groups of people towards the shed in which the tractor was biding its time. He had told her it was to start at twelve o'clock, but she hadn't promised to come. And now it was twelve. He forgot his dejections. Everything was going well! Even the weather was, as Tom said, staggering on. Splendid!

Car laughed in his exultant face.

' You look as if you had been left a fortune, instead of just having spent one on that monster. Is it going to happen soon ? '

' You'll see ! ' said Dan, exulting more.

He disappeared into the tractor's shed. ' He's like a boy with a new knife,' she thought, ' and what a handsome boy ! Excitement suits him.' She sat down on the step of a farmer's trap and considered Dan. How he had developed since the day she had dubbed him Sir Daniel ! She remembered how she had thought of him as a monster, ' but a nice monster. I knew as little about him then as I do of the monster in there,' she thought ; ' he's become a person now. Quite a real person, and so good to sing to—I suppose they'll marry him up to Eileen Caulfield some of these days ! He won't be allowed to listen to my singing then, that I can assure him !—Oh, here it comes ! '

Deep grunts and hissings and jets of steam were proceeding from the shed. The mechanic, who had been superintending the toilet and nourishment of the machine, came running out to clear the course. Right and left fled the farmers ; an avenue was made, as for a royal procession, and a long and breathless pause followed. Every eye was fixed on the dark mouth of the shed. Then Dan emerged with a perturbed countenance.

' The fool can't make out what's wrong,' he said to Car. ' It's most extraordinary—she won't stir ! '

Car said sympathetically : ' Try her with a lump of sugar or a carrot.'

With a single reproachful glance Dan returned to the shed, and the audience resumed its attitude of suspense.

At a quarter-past twelve, without warning, and

with three terrific roars, the tractor burst from the shed and rushed half-way across the yard, when it was brought to an abrupt stop by its keeper, in order to save the life of Baby Bullet who, lulled to a fancied security by the delay, was standing precisely in its path, making humorously sarcastic observations on its failure to function.

'If she might have killed that old man,' said the keeper later to a sympathiser, 'she'd have had the field ploughed by now!'

Unfortunately, however, the conventions had interfered, and the tractor, piqued, it may be supposed, by the frustration of her intentions, had then refused to move any farther.

At 1.30 all remained unchanged, and it was apparent that a large and immediate lunch alone could relieve the situation. That ancestral strain of munificence, to which allusion has been made, had not failed Mrs. Palliser in the hour of need. In the big corn-loft she had caused two long tables to be prepared, and of all those who addressed themselves to the admirable repast which she had provided, only herself and Dan might have hesitated to assent to the grace after meat pronounced by Mr. Timsey Coadey; that same Mr. Coadey who had, on an earlier occasion, crossed swords with Baby Bullet.

'Have I enough ate is it?' he exclaimed, in response to Tom McLoughlen's assiduities. 'You may take your oath I have! I've ate all was before me and around me!' "Betther busht than waste!" as the old woman said when she cooked her cat!

'That's no bad one!' said Mr. Coadey's neighbour, young Mr. Adams. 'Faith, there's food to further ordhers here, and drink too, begob!'

'Ah, I've joined the Holy and Blessed Order of the Perpetual Thirst,' said Mr. Coadey regretfully. "'Twas the wife coaxed me one day I was drunk.'

'Well, isn't that a pity!' said Mr. Adams, with sympathy. 'You were too good-natured always! Sure, don't they say it's when ye gets drunk that ye must show your manners?'

'Maybe it's drunk the old engine is!' suggested Tom McLoughlen, who, a stout and swarthy Ganymede, was making a slow circuit of the tables, laden with bottles of porter, and talking agreeably to the guests where opportunity served. 'And the best manners and the only manners *she* has, is to sit aisy and do nothing! Isn't it what they say a pairson should sit aisy when there's a hole in their breeches? Maybe there's more holes in that one than we seen yet! I declare to me soul I thought I'd stay laughin' a week when she ran at poor Mr. Coyne.'

'Why, then, he's not the better of it yet,' observed Mr. Coadey, with a hostile eye on the Baby, who was sitting on the opposite side of the table some distance higher up. 'Look at the pout he have on him this minute! He'll have it in for your Boss, and the engine too, Tom! The Baby's a cross boy when he's vexed!'

'D'ye know what it is has him vexed, Mr. Coadey?' murmured Tom mysteriously. 'There's too many altogether joining Mr. Dan's Co-operation Shop! It'll do no good to the Eskragh General Emporium!'

Such a wink as might, without over-statement, be compared to the slam of a door was the only reply made by Mr. Coadey to Tom McLoughlen's explanation, since the proprietor of the establishment in question was Mr. Nicholas Coyne.

CHAPTER XV

'LATE, late, in a gloaming, Kilmeny cam' hame,' and it was not until six o'clock that evening that the tractor's ill-temper yielded to the blandishments of her attendant, and, with a sudden violence as though a new spirit had been born in her, she started from her stand-point in the yard, thundered away to the field allotted to her activities, and fell to ploughing it, faultlessly and without hesitation. The weather's staggerings had ended, as staggerings often do end, in a fall, a fall of steady and persistent rain, and most of the visitors had departed, but enough of the elect had remained to hurry up and down the long field, regardless of discomfort, following the machine, and saying to each other, 'better late than never!' or 'she proved good in the latther end!' according to their social standing (since education varies only the form, not the spirit of the platitude). The furrows left Dan's brow in precise proportion to their appearance on the face of his field. His theories were vindicated, and scientific farming was justified of her offspring. The tractor ate up the green field in a manner that defied criticism ; even Tom McLoughlen, like the ranks of Tuscany, could scarce forbear to cheer. Dan and his new toy went home in the dusk, hand-in-hand, as one might say, at peace with each other and with all the world.

Early on the following day, which was the first of August, and was as fair and gay a morning as its

predecessor had been depressing, Dan rode up into the hills to gather, as he hoped, an outlying sheep into his co-operative fold. Tara, the young chestnut mare, was fresh and gay as the morning. She pranced and danced and shied and amused herself and her rider so well that the miles seemed nothing to her, and Dan encouraged her in her folly, and forgot for a time to brood over the customary horrors of the morning paper that seemed each day to increase in numbers and in magnitude. But not for long was this immunity granted. He was roughly dragged back to the hard business of life by one of those sights that, even in his reasonably peaceful district, had become a commonplace. He was up in the hills now, the purple and pink of heather and ling was all about him. A lovely little stream, clear and tawny as sherry, came gambolling down to meet him ; it swooped sideways under a humpbacked bridge, and Dan, looking at it and loving it, remembered where he was. This was the Crooked Bridge of Knockariska, and just beyond it was the wreck that was all that was left of the lonely police-barracks of Knockariska. It was but a fortnight since it had been attacked, but it looked as if years must have gone by since it could have been an orderly, human dwelling-place. The roof had fallen in, the window-openings were only blackened sockets, the pierced iron shutters, that had been impotent for protection, hung, twisted, on their hinges ; the entrance door was gone, charred rafters hung down in the opening. One policeman of the small garrison had been killed, and two others badly wounded, in the gallant but unavailing fight, against ten times their number, that they had made. Dan's father had built the house, and Dan himself would, no doubt, presently

be awarded a considerable sum in compensation for its destruction, which would, presumably, be levied off the district.

'I'd give the money twenty times over,' he thought, 'for it not to have happened!'

Up in these higher places flies and dust were not; the little-travelled road was smooth and bare of stones, and the young mare, having danced off the wild freshness of morning, paced along the close sod of the roadside ribbon of grass with sedate decorum. Her even foot-fall shook the water in the ditches on either side of the narrow road, and the darkened reflection of the sky's blue and silver that they held shimmered and trembled as she passed, their mimicry shattered. The fine day had brought men and women into the bogs to 'foot the turf,' piling the sods into little heaps to dry, before bringing them home, and here and there among the rocks, above the drowning grasp of the bog, the late mountain-hay was being made.

Most of these lands of Knockariska had belonged to Colonel Palliser; Dan's progress was slow, by reason of talk with the turf-cutters, or the haymakers, many of whom he knew, and all of whom knew him. He shed the touch of gloom and shyness that tinged his ordinary demeanour, when he talked to the poor people. His manner caught from their's something of its ease and pleasantness, of the social self-possession that is almost Latin in the feeling it imparts of an ancient civilisation, a traditional culture. It needed the evidence of the ruined barracks, the remembrance of the sobbing wife of the dead policeman, for Dan to realise that this was 'a disturbed area,' and that these friendly men and compliment-paying women, staying their work to talk to him, these bright-eyed,

upstanding lads who gave him so eagerly news of the foxes and their family affairs, were all, probably, involved, if not actually taking part, in a deep conspiracy against existing law and authority.

‘Rebels !’ he thought, ‘half-conquered rebels of near eight hundred years’ making ! Fools, chucking away peace and prosperity for an unforgotten dream ! Romance versus reality—the old story of the “Dog and the Shadow” ! The inborn romantic tradition exploited and made red hot by education, lies, and propaganda !’

His thoughts turned to his own recipe for tranquilising his fellow-countrymen. Prosperity. Was he making the wrong declaration, playing a hopeless game ? Can romance be stifled with feather beds, however deep and comfortable ? It sounded absurd, from all points of view. He thought of the men who had sacrificed themselves to the ‘Plan of Campaign,’ and had given up home and land for a cause ; of those who, like ‘Shemus O’Brien,’ in Le Fanu’s poem, had in successive generations, ‘taken to the mountains,’ in futile insurrection against the greatest power in the world. Fools, no doubt ; and yet he felt kinship with them ; he was a romantic too ; he knew that he, also, but for his upbringing, might have taken to the mountains ; that in him was a spark of that divine folly that makes sometimes for madness, sometimes for misery, yet is sometimes a beacon telling of the high places of human nature. Against his judgment, the poet, that must be in the enthusiast, was stirred. ‘I believe I’m half-way with them myself—a rotten position !—Half-way ! An ass halting between two burdens, a Laodicean, neither hot nor cold ! Good Lord ! I’m worse than that, I’m *both* !’ In short,

Mr. Facing-both-ways, as he had called himself to Lady Ducarrig that night on the hill, the night of the Baal fires.

Some connection of ideas changed his thought. With an inward shudder he remembered that intolerable talk with his mother. There could be no stopping half-way about *that* proposition. He had thought about it often since she had made it a few mornings ago. Uncle Dick's overtures couldn't be ignored, he would have to be given an answer. Why couldn't they let him alone, to plough and to sow and to reap and to mow, and not worry him with a wife? If the Admiral would lend him the money, on any reasonable terms that didn't include Eileen, what a herd of Friesians he would have! He used to like Eileen well enough. (He thought rather uncomfortably of those war-time leave-takings, and wondered if she thought of them too.) The question now was how many pure-bred Friesians would make her worth while? He laughed morosely, and thought of the man who was choosing a wife for his son, and said there wasn't the value of a heifer bechuxt any two women.

He found himself at the stony bohireen that led, between high fences draped with brambles, to his destination, Patrick Curtin's farm-house. (By the bye, why did those fellows yesterday say 'God help Patsey Curtin'? Perhaps he would find that out presently.) . . . At this point he was attacked by three large cur dogs, and had to direct all his thoughts and energies to the task of preventing them from biting the chestnut mare's white heels (and thereby probably teaching her to kick hounds for the rest of her life).

Patrick Curtin met him in the spacious, untidy

farmyard. He took the mare from Dan, and having immured her in one of the darksome shelters surrounding the yard, he returned. He was a stout, elderly man, handsome, clean-shaven, save for small iron-grey whiskers. He walked slowly, his face was grave.

'Come inside, Mr. Palliser,' he said with an effort, that was perceptible, to speak cheerfully, 'come inside, sir, and sit down; ye've come a long way, and the day is warm.'

Dan was not specially observant, but he knew Patrick Curtin well, and though the courtesy of his manner was unchanged, its accustomed geniality was gone, and his usually jolly voice was lifeless. The farm-house was a large one, with two stories; Patrick Curtin led his visitor through the empty kitchen into a small sitting-room behind it, and placed a chair for him at the large table that almost filled the room. He took from a sideboard a tray on which were a decanter and a jug of water and some glasses, and took a plate of biscuits out of a drawer. He placed them on the table, and sat down opposite to Dan with his back to the door.

'You must take something, Mr. Palliser,' he said, 'it's a long road from here to Monalour.'

He poured out two glasses of whisky, and handing one to Dan, he drank the other off at a draught.

Dan felt oppressed, he knew not by what. In the room overhead there was constant movement; feet fumbling to and fro, low voices, and many openings and shuttings of the door. Patrick Curtin's attention was formally his, but it was plain that his ears were strained to listen to the sounds from above. Even his attitude as he sat at the table had an effect of momentariness, and of temporary arrest.

Nevertheless, Dan, having no alternative, took up his parable, and becoming interested in his subject, discoursed of his projects, and of the need in these disordered times of 'the decent people, like you and me, Patrick, sticking together and doing their best to keep things going, in spite of all !'

He looked at Patrick Curtin's face as he spoke, and saw, with bewilderment, that his eyes were full of tears.

'What's the matter, Patrick ?' he stammered.
'What have I said ?'

'You said nothing,' said Patrick Curtin heavily, 'nothing but what is good, sober sense, and what I'd approve of, and what I'd wish to hear from your father's son.'

'Wouldn't you tell me—mighthn't I ask you what's troubling you ?'

The farmer's large, dark blue eyes, red-rimmed and bloodshot, were set on the little square of window behind Dan's head. Tears, that he heeded no more than a child heeds them, ran slowly down his dark-skinned face.

'Too much trouble I have !' He brought his fist down on the table with a heavy gesture of finality. 'My cup of sorrow is full !'—he paused, moving restlessly, as if he were in physical pain, his eyes went from Dan's face to the window and back again—'but I cannot speak of it——'

Dan stretched his long arm across the table and covered Patrick Curtin's hand with his.

'Patrick, you've known me all my life—you know you can trust me—give me a chance—I might be able to help.'

Patrick Curtin withdrew his fist from beneath Dan's hand, and struck the table, so that half the

whisky and water in Dan's glass was spilled on the American leather covering.

'No one can help me ! Man cannot help me, nor God neither.'

He gazed unseeingly at Dan. He looked as if he were staring into the eyes of Sorrow herself.

'Oh God ! My two boys, my fine sons, to be dying above there, shot like dogs !' He got on to his feet clumsily and violently, his chair fell with a crash. 'I call down the curse of Almighty God——' he began, raging.

The door was burst open, and Father Hugh Macnamara came in swiftly, and put his hand on the farmer's shoulder.

'Mr. Curtin,' he said urgently, 'Tim's going ! Come quickly !' He gave Dan a glance of recognition. 'Wait !' he said to him over his shoulder.

Dan sat in the kitchen and smoked. One cigarette followed another. Nothing happened. One of the cur collies strayed in through the open door, vaguely wagging her tail ; she investigated a pan or two, and strayed out again. A kettle on the small range boiled ; its lid clattered like a typewriter. The door upstairs opened again, and a tall grey woman, whom Dan knew to be Patrick Curtin's wife, hurried through the kitchen without seeming to see he was there, and went into the sitting-room. He saw her tear open a long drawer in a cupboard, and snatch a brown garment from folds of paper ; then she rushed upstairs, back to the room she had left. He realised that she had fetched 'the habit,' the garment that has been blessed, and that blesses and sanctifies the last faint-drawn breath. And ever, in a steady undercurrent of sound, he heard the priest's voice, hushed and solemn,

and answering murmurs, the answering voices rising and falling in what he knew was prayer.

Suddenly a hubbub arose outside the house. The dogs barked, there was outcry from the geese and the fowl, and the young mare whinnied loudly. An outside car had been driven into the yard at full speed. As Dan reached the door, he saw Abina Cashen, dressed all in black, spring from the car. She came running to the house, and as she came she called out to Dan :

‘ How is he ? How is he ? ’

Before he could answer, she was at the door. She took one look at his face.

‘ What ! You ! ’ she cried, with a surprise that seemed to Dan to have horror, even repulsion, mingled with it, and without waiting for a reply she crushed past him in the doorway and ran on up the stairs.

It was all mystifying, alarming, even dreadful. He wished that Father Hugh had not told him to wait. He could do nothing. He felt himself smothering in the cloud of sinister grief that was on this house. ‘ And how many more like it ? ’ he thought. As he stood, uncertain, on the threshold, the voices upstairs that were torturing him ceased abruptly. He heard quick movements, and then out of the sudden stillness came a succession of shrieks, barbaric, utterly ungoverned, that cleft him as it were with a sword.

Dan fled from the house with these following him, incongruous and incredible in the sunny morning, with the fowl, restored to calm, moving meditatively in and out of the stables, and a large sow lying on her side, in placid repose, on a heap of litter. The outside car that had brought Abina Cashen was on the farther side of the yard, the horse, dripping with sweat,

standing with its neck stretched out and its head down, its sides heaving. The driver had gone to a pump near the entrance gate, and had set the water flowing and was drinking from the spout.

Dan betook himself to the stable in which his mare was standing. With his eyes full of the sun he could but just descry her in the darkness. She eyed him, after the manner of young horses, with suspicion, an unfriendly gaze, as though she had never seen him before, and never wished to see him again ; but those horrible yells were in his ears, and he wanted the comfort of companionship. He went up to her and talked to her, and petted her, and she relented towards him, and softly touched his face with her soft muzzle, and rubbed her head against his arm. He leaned his brow against her silky, scented neck, as though the pressure would steady the whirl of thought. There was a horror in this obscure and secret tragedy, of which he knew nothing, yet guessed all ; with its past a remorseless intrigue, its present a vain sacrifice, its outcome a hidden grave. It caught his imagination, and drove his thoughts into chaos, as a wind drives and lashes the waves of a lake pent among hills. All that Ireland had suffered in the past, was suffering in the present, would surely continue to suffer in the future—whether by her own fault or that of others he cared nothing—came over him. A wave of emotion rose higher than its fellows, and swept him with it.

‘ I dedicate myself to Ireland,’ he muttered aloud, his arm over Tara’s withers, his brow against her neck. ‘ And Tara is my witness ! What I can do, I will do, so help me God ! ’

Father Hugh started for home with Dan. They

rode, one behind the other, down the bohireen, with the briars, laden with their promises of fruit, snatching at them as they passed. On the main road the priest pushed his horse on and joined Dan.

'This is an old animal was lent me, Mr. Palliser, and I won't keep you back,' he began, his pale, clear eyes fixed on Dan, in vain effort to pierce the fog of short-sight and read what might be found in his face. 'I only asked you to wait because I was afraid I mighthn't have another chance to see you, and I thought it would be advisable to explain things that you mighthn't understand—'

'I don't think there's much that I don't understand,' said Dan, looking steadily at Father Hugh.

'You may understand all, but you saw nothing,' said the priest eagerly. 'That's the main point!'

'Tell me one thing,' Dan said. 'Are both the boys dead?'

'I'll tell you nothing, only what you must know already. Tim Curtin is dead.'

'I want to know what brought Miss Cashen here, and what she has against me,' said Dan stubbornly.

Father Hugh forced the old horse he was riding up to the mare; he put his hand on Dan's knee.

'I know I can trust you,' he said, with certainty in his voice. 'She was going to be married to that poor boy that's just after dying. She hardly knows what she's saying or doing either.'

'It wasn't so much what she said,' Dan persisted. 'It was the way she looked at me—as if she hated me.'

The priest hesitated, then he said firmly, 'Well, now, I'll tell you, Mr. Palliser. She thinks it was you brought the police to take her brother!'

'I brought the police! Good God!' Dan said

incredulously. He could hardly find words. ‘ *You don’t believe that?* ’

‘ D’ye think I’d be speaking to you like this, now, if I did? ’ said the priest gently. ‘ I told Abina what I thought, but she’s distracted—and oh! Mr. Palliser, don’t be angry if I beg you to forget anything that you saw to-day! All that those unfortunate poor creatures of parents ask now is to be let bury their dead in silence.’

‘ You might know me well enough not to ask that,’ interrupted Dan roughly. ‘ Didn’t you and I settle a month ago we’d work for peace? How can you think I could want to make bad worse? ’

‘ Oh! Peace, peace! ’ cried the priest. ‘ We cry peace where there is no peace! When was there peace in Ireland? The lamp of revolt was never quenched in her! Sometimes it has been only a dagger-point of flame, sometimes a red bonfire is kindled out of it! Look at what is happening this day, and getting worse every day in place of better! Oh God! Will the time ever come when these flames will die in the broad daylight of peace, and Ireland be left to fulfil her destiny? ’

He stopped speaking; his pale eyes communed with the sky. He had forgotten his companion, and he started when Dan spoke.

‘ And what’s her destiny? ’ Dan asked.

His voice was harsh and unsympathetic, the priest’s outburst had jarred his quivering nerves and made him angry. The thought ‘ Is he quoting from an old sermon, or rehearsing for a new one? ’ crossed his mind. He said aloud bitterly: ‘ To be “The Seething Pot” from one generation to another! That’s her destiny, I suppose! ’

'To be the Sanctuary of Religion,' said Father Hugh, with a light in his other-worldly eyes, 'to be the one country in the world that cherishes our Holy Church !'

His voice had deepened and his brogue had broadened. The peasant-boy that he had been was in his voice, but in his face was Vision, and assurance of a Peace that is not of this world.

CHAPTER XVI

'WELL now, Bill,' said Mr. Ryan confidentially to William Heskin, Dan Palliser's groom, 'tell me is it a fact that you and your boss is jumping this mare at the Show? I wouldn't approve of that at all. She's too green altogether for that work.'

'Sure I told him that this while back,' returned Heskin, 'but nothing would content him only that I should lunge her over every bank in the barony, let alone himself riding her hither and over, from Dublin to Dingledicooch, as you might say, talking to the people about these fashionable fi-garros of creameries and milk-measuring! And little they regard him! With the whole country rotten with Sinn Fein, and too much money in the farmers' pockets already! It's only to laugh at him they'll do!' Heskin, like most countrymen who are not farmers, hated that much privileged class, but remembering that Mr. Ryan was one of them, he continued hastily: 'Hard-shipping the mare, that's all the good it done! If I had one more fortnight with her I wouldn't say a word, but this past week was too wet to take her out, the banks was no better than bogs. And sure the Show's in four days now.'

'Well, she's looking good enough after all,' said Jimmy, turning in his saddle, and looking the chestnut mare all over with a search-light eye. 'If I never bred a worse one than that I'd do! That's a mare if ye had her at the Dublin Show she'd sell like a box

o' matches at a street corner ! She's the very cut and stand of a good hunter !'

Even though Heskin was well aware that Mr. Ryan never had been known to disparage any animal that he had ever owned, still less, bred, he felt gratified by this tribute.

'She's a nice, loose mare,' he acknowledged, 'and she's clever enough too. She'd change feet on the side of a sixpence ; but they makes up them jumps very crabby at that Show. Didn't yourself see Mr. Dan to fall her over the bank that's in it ? And it's very hard to fall that mare. But indeed it's a dirty, ugly old bank enough.'

'Now, Bill, I'll tell ye what ye'll do,' said Mr. Ryan impressively. 'Take the mare into the show-ground again, and let her have that bank a couple or three times, and she'll make nothing at all of it at the Show ! I'd like well to have her win.'

'And in the name of God, how can I do that ?' asked Heskin testily. 'How can I get her into the dam' place ?'

'Come with me now and I'll show you that soon enough !' replied Jimmy Ryan.

It was a chilly morning in the second week of August ; one of those grey, threatening mornings when the conviction that summer cannot last for ever is suddenly born, and arrives at a forced maturity when the threat fulfils itself, as it generally does, in a downpour of cold rain. The two men rode quietly along the hilly road to Eskragh, the two young horses comporting themselves with the bored docility that young horses habitually reserve for their professional attendants.

'Well now, Mr. Ryan,' said Heskin, breaking a

meditative silence, ‘ could you tell me of any horses that’s going to jump ? What’d be against us if we entered the mare ? ’

‘ I’m told the lord above at Monalour has a good sort of a bay horse that he might enter,’ replied Mr. Ryan, ‘ but sure he’s strange to the banks that we have here ; there’s no need to be afraid of him. He couldn’t look at that mare at all.’

This presumed diffidence on the part of Lord Ducarrig’s horse did not allay Heskin’s anxieties.

‘ Sure I know that bay horse well, and a good horse he is too. They say he won one time, jumping in Dublin.’

‘ Well, he mightn’t win here,’ said Jimmy consolingly. ‘ Did you hear we knocked a Challenge Cup out of his lordship, and a dam’ good one too ! ’

‘ He’s well able to give it,’ said Heskin, ‘ he’s full up o’ money. That young lad of a shuffoore he has, told me he wants to buy Monalour House off Mr. Dan ! ’

‘ He may whistle for that,’ said Jimmy Ryan, with a scornful laugh. ‘ Is it get Monalour from Mr. Dan ? No fear he’ll get it, and no more will his bay horse get the prize from that mare ! You can be easy about that, Bill Heskin ! ’

They had arrived at Eskragh and were riding through the town ; as they turned into the chief of its two principal streets Heskin pulled out his watch. ‘ I wonder have I the time right ? ’ he said, looking up at the building they were passing. ‘ Oh, begance, I forgot ! That’s the third time now I’m made a fool of this way ! ’

Jimmy Ryan, who was an old-fashioned Nationalist and had the courage of his opinions, laughed angrily. ‘ It’s neither English time, nor Irish time, nor God’s time, ye’ll get there now, and God only knows what

good's to be got out o' this work ! Past time will come again before Ireland 'll make good what these bloody rogues have destroyed on her !'

The building was once the Court-house. Where the town-clock had been, was now a hole with blackened edges. The roof was gone, only the outside walls still stood, frail and windowless, the entrance door and the lower window-openings were boarded over.

'That was Sinn Fein work ; next turr'n will be the Black and Tans !' said Heskin sardonically. 'Great times for Ireland, isn't it, Mr. Ryan ? "Between the jigs and the reels," as they say, a pairson wouldn't know hardly where he'd be ! Shot dead one day, may be, and burnt out the next !'

They rode on through the quiet town, with its many dogs straying on the roadways, or seated watchfully on the narrow pavements. A few farmers' traps stood at the shop-doors, and here and there were gatherings of three or four people, engaged, as were most Irish people in that unhappy year, in eager, yet cautious, almost furtive, political discussion. Jimmy stopped at a prosperous-looking public-house. That it was also the office of the Agricultural Show Committee was announced by a placard in an upper window.

'Ketch this fellow for me,' he said, giving his reins to Heskin, and dismounting. He went into the house, and in a very few minutes returned.

'If ye'll wait one five minutes for me,' he said in a whisper, 'I'll go down to the show-ground with you. There's a small share of business to be done above. The Commytee is having a meeting, and by all that was lucky 'twas the Baby was in the chair ! I told him he couldn't refuse the key to the President's horse, and he didn't either !'

CHAPTER XVII

WHEN Arnold Gilmour, afterwards first Baron Ducarrig, chose his wife, and took her, young and tender, from the schoolroom, as David was taken from the sheep-folds, he considered that he had acted with all his wonted intelligence. She had not betrayed his judgment either in looks or in manners. Both were entirely creditable to him. She wore his diamonds with distinction, and played her part in the realms over which he had ruled, with a success that had, he had sometimes thought, been even a trifle excessive in proportion to her merits and his. That she had never made any effort or even pretence of affection for him had not troubled him long, since the bonds of matrimony were thereby loosened, and alternative objects of devotion entailed fewer responsibilities, and had the merit of variety. But in one important department of her duties his wife had failed conspicuously. A daughter, who, having had the temerity to take the place of a son and heir, could not contrive even to live, was a disastrous token of Car's inadequacy, an indisputable proof of the unreliability of women. To have acquired, by his own remarkable competence, all that is needed to found a family, and to be frustrated by Fate in the matter of the small but indispensable particular of an heir, was Lord Ducarrig's just grievance. He had many times surveyed the position, but had failed to find in it any promise of improvement. How could he expect to be able to marry again when Car held a handi-

cap of twenty-five years ? If on either of them the privilege of a fresh start were to be conferred, he could not conceal from himself that the odds were in Car's favour, and that his prospect of being able to reorganise his matrimonial affairs was a remarkably indifferent one. There had been a moment, some few years ago, when it had seemed possible that one of his A.D.C.'s, good-looking above the average, might have simplified the position by persuading his Chief's wife to anticipate the freedom that Time would probably bestow upon her, and to run away with him. His Chief had waited and watched, with a singular mixture of concealed hope and hatred, for the crash that did not come. Possibly Ducarrig had underestimated his wife's sense of duty, or honour, or her susceptibility ; or, possibly, in jealousy of which he was only half aware, he had overestimated the threat of the position. The good-looking A.D.C. was swept away to the war, and fell in Flanders, and Lord and Lady Ducarrig's union continued to present to the world a front of unbroken serenity.

The large and general garden-party at Monalour, that its new occupants had considered to be incumbent on them, was, as is said of a shower, passing over. It had begun heavily, as is often the case with showers, and there had even been a moment when the possibility of a frost had been indicated. Even as far back in the crescendo of Irish trouble as the beginning of August, 1920, the gaiety of Irish gatherings was something thwarted, but on this pleasant afternoon the danger had passed with an early and profuse display of tea-tables under the widespread branches of the big beech-tree near the lawn-tennis grounds, and a genial sense of repletion inspirited alike the players of games and the talkers of gossip.

Prominent among the latter was that able conversationalist, Miss Katie de Vere, and round her basket chair was a serried circle of those scarcely less gifted and useful people, whose energies are devoted to the allied art of listening, acceptingly and stimulatingly, an art possessed in a high degree by such an audience as Miss de Vere's, consisting as it did of her friends and neighbours, for the most part agreeable and well-bred people, typical examples of that combination of levity and pessimism, of conscientiousness and good-natured laxity, of practical benevolence, abusiveness, and courage, that characterise the class which is usually spoken of as the Anglo-Irish gentry. Stimulation was, however, superfluous where a narrator as skilled as Katie de Vere was concerned. Raids for arms, burnings, kidnappings, reprisals, all that that troubled summer had to endure, was power to her engines, grist to her mill. With devastating impartiality she made the worst of every side, and mitigated nothing except the truth. But, since it was Ireland, even the most lurid of Miss de Vere's histories had in it some saving clause of absurdity, some twinkling point of humour or good-nature.

'They broke into the MacDermotts a few nights ago,' said Katie; 'they were looking for arms, and were frantic because the only thing they could find was a duck-gun old enough to be put in a museum ! "Isn't it a shame for ye," said one of the Sinn Feiners, "to have nothing but an old piece like that, that if we let it off maybe would only kill ourselves ? Go down on your knees now," they said to Johnny MacDermott, "and tell us if ye haven't a good gun in the house." "And can't I tell you a lie on my knees as well as on my feet ? " says Johnny ! And, you know, that made

the creatures laugh. It appealed to them. Florence MacDermott says *she* gave them the scolding of a lifetime. Can't you *hear* Florence? I believe they told her they would shoot her if she said another word to them! I never thought I should have sympathised with Sinn Feiners!' Katie swung an eye round her group, and satisfied that her point was taken, went on with her history. 'Florence says they wanted to search all the rooms, but she absolutely refused to let them go into the nursery and terrify the children with their black faces. She told them the baby would have convulsions if he saw them, and the leader agreed most politely, and looked complacently at his sooty-faced ragamuffins, and said "And he couldn't be blemt if he did, ma'am."

'They came to us a few nights ago,' broke in a listener, 'and took Margaret's little rook-rifle. She begged them to take care of it, and they promised they'd return it, later on, when they had done with it!'

'When de Valera is crowned king!' suggested someone else, a pessimist.

'Or George the Fifth!' gibed another, an optimist.

'Have they been to the Pallisers yet?' asked another of the circle, with a glance at Dan, who was playing lawn-tennis.

'No, I believe not,' said Miss de Vere shortly.

'I shouldn't be very much surprised if they let Dan off,' said Mrs. Caulfield with mild malevolence. Dan was out of favour with his Aunt and Uncle of Fairhaven. 'I'm very fond of Dan,' went on Dan's Aunt Eleanor, 'but things I hear make me rather afraid he's going too far with his Nationalistic tendencies—letting them pass the most disloyal

resolutions at that District Council without even a protest, and — ’

‘ Good Heavens, he’s not turning rebel, is he ? ’ burst in an old soldier with a purple face and a clipped white moustache. ‘ I wish the blackguards would steal *his* cattle, the way they stole three from me the other night ! That’d teach him ! ’

‘ Yes, or took all his cigarettes and his field-glasses as they did to General Hamilton ! ’ said the woman who had first spoken. ‘ You know they’re charging the unfortunate farmers six shillings a cow ! And making them pay it too, whether they sympathize or no ! ’

‘ Dan’s all right ! ’ said Katie de Vere pugnaciously. ‘ I’ll answer for it he’ll do nothing that he need be ashamed of ! He’s doing his best for the country, and it will be a disgrace to the Sinn Feiners if they don’t let him alone ! ’

‘ They came to my house last week,’ said a pretty young woman, dressed in black. ‘ The only arms I had was Harry’s sword. I begged them to leave it with me. They were quite civil, but they took it. But do you know, Colonel Kennedy, the next morning I found it under a tree on the avenue ! ’

There was an instant of pause. Harry had been killed in the war, and not many of the listeners but had a reason for sympathy. Colonel Kennedy grunted, and thought to himself that it might be all very well for that poor little Fanny Joyce to love her enemies, but she couldn’t expect him at his time of life to do such a thing. Mrs. Caulfield said, acidly, that she couldn’t help regretting that Dan should be mixed up in any way with disloyalty.

‘ He’s got an M.C., hasn’t he ? ’ said Harry’s widow,

with a touch of combativeness. Harry and Dan had been friends, and had served together in the war.

' My steward tells me,' said the old colonel, ' that there are more fellows killed in these scraps than any-one has any idea of. For instance, that affair up at Knockariska, when they killed a policeman—the shooting wasn't all on one side there, I can tell you ! But they whip away the wounded and no one knows anything——'

' Except their people ! ' said Harry's widow, almost in a whisper.

' Or the priests ! ' flung in Colonel Kennedy hotly. ' *They* know all about it ! '

Katie de Vere was looking at the old soldier's angry face with something like consternation.

' Knockariska, did you say, Colonel Kennedy ? Did the Sinn Feiners lose men there ? ' She was thinking of how she had met Dan Palliser, and that young priest from Eskragh, at the Knockariska cross-roads a few days ago, and had wondered where they had been together.

Colonel Kennedy did not reply. He had struggled hastily to his feet from the low chair in which he had been sitting, and at this moment was, with his most soldierly and *empressé* manner, offering it to his hostess.

Car Ducarrig, very well dressed, very handsome, with her tranquil, yet trenchant simplicity, her wonderful voice, and the manner whose cool indifference was contradicted by the sympathy that might, by the person in need of it, be met with in her eyes, was still something of an excitement in the society into which she had dropped, suddenly, like a strange, dazzling bird of passage. Katie de Vere had expressed the feelings of most people when she said : ' If I weren't in

love with her, I should dislike her ! Can any one tell me what Lord Ducarrig's views are ? '

Car declined the proffered seat. She said she was trying to beat up people to play golf-croquet. ' Arnold has collected some victims. Any volunteers here ? '

Katie de Vere, wiry if elderly, and a noted player of games, responded with alacrity.

' But you're too good for golf-croquet,' said Car, as they left the group. ' I'll make up a set of tennis for you. I can find some one else for Arnold. Who will you have ? Dan Palliser's rather good——'

' She calls him " Dan " ! ' thought Miss de Vere, registering the fact in a brain-cell with a mental click. ' I wonder what Georgina would say !—Or Arnold ! ' Aloud she said : ' I saw him playing very well just now, in a set with you. I heard he had been laid up by a fall.'

' That was when his mare came down with him at the show-ground,' said Car ; her eyes turned towards Dan who was standing watching the lawn-tennis players ; she decided that he looked very well in flannels. ' I knew he was more hurt than he would admit,' she went on. ' Men are such idiots ! If they're really hurt, they say nothing ; if they aren't, they behave as if they were dying ! They have neither sense nor moderation as *we* have ! '

' Some of us ! ' said Katie de Vere dryly, and thought, ' I think you may have sense, but I have my doubts about the moderation, my young friend ! Though I don't think the worse of you for that,' she added in a mental postscript.

The garden-party moved prosperously on its way in the accustomed channels. The weather was agreeable, the restoratives, provided under the beech-tree

for exhausted revellers, were admirable; the golf-croquet, the lawn-tennis, the herded expeditions to the herbaceous borders and the conservatory, all fulfilled themselves according to plan, and the guests felt that they had been entertained well, and in conformity with all the best traditions.

It was seven o'clock before the last car had been sped on its homeward way, and of all the company, Dan Palliser and his cousin Eileen Caulfield alone remained. Their hostess had held them back when the general rout set in.

“The hour came of her last caress!” she had quoted, letting herself fall into a chair. ‘We have indeed drunk the cup of pleasure to the dregs—No, please don’t go home, stay for one last dredg! After dinner we can go on the lake and be calm, and take Eileen home. Do forgive me for saying Eileen, I’m too tired to call you Miss Caulfield. Please hit back, if you like! Arnold, do you mind ringing the bell and saying they’re staying for dinner?’

Ducarrig’s eyeglass, that had been directed towards his wife’s face, turned, as it were mechanically, to Eileen’s. The charming carmine of her cheek deepened. She laughed a little nervously. It seemed to her, as it had seemed to him, an amusing coincidence that on the same afternoon both Lord and Lady Ducarrig should have elected to call her by her Christian name.

CHAPTER XVIII

CHANGES had been made in the familiar dining-room since Dan and Eileen had last dined there. A round mahogany table, almost black from age, had been imported to take the place of that which, long, and robed in white, Dan had always known. Mrs. Palliser held that there was something dissolute, if not immodest, about an unclothed table; Dan felt that her portrait on the end wall was regarding the change with severe disapproval. Electric light had been installed, and densely shaded red lights illumined the silver and glass and flowers with concentrated intensity, while the faces of the diners were but half-seen, and the rest of the room was dark, except for a light on a screened side-table.

Dan was very tired. He had spent the morning at a committee meeting of the Farmers' Society in Eskragh, hammering out preliminary details in connection with his Co-operative Creamery, and, impelled by that missionary ardour that, in some fated persons, will not be denied, he had spent himself in vain debate with unbelievers. To convert is to bestow. A conversion is a transfusion of soul, and Dan had given without stint. To soul weariness the afternoon had added physical fatigue. When he sat down he felt as if he were in a dream, and wondered if it were indeed the solid oak boards, and the well-known old Turkey carpet, beneath his feet. Gradually, however, as dinner progressed, and food and wine did their work,

he found himself ; his companions emerged from remoteness, he took a gulp of champagne, and thanked God that Ducarrig had considered that the occasion demanded it. As his forces revived, he became aware that Lady Ducarrig appeared to be as tired as he felt. He watched her, wondering if anything disturbing had happened. Possibly her nerves were tuned higher than usual to-night. Her face in the dim red glow seemed stilled by some exhaustion more profound than mere fatigue. She leaned back in her chair, while Ducarrig's and Eileen's talk flowed by her, as a tired traveller might lean against a tree by a stream, and take no heed of its flowing. Dan's eyes dwelt on her more often than he knew. Once she lifted her dark-lashed lids as if she found it an effort to do so, and met his look, and he thought the smile she gave him was as tangible a touch of friendship as if she had laid her hand on his. His sallow cheek flushed faintly.

Car said, with that delightful smile, ‘ Yes ! I see you’re thinking I’m the life and soul of the party ! I’m sorry to be so dull. I shall wake up when I’ve had some coffee.’

‘ Don’t make too violent an effort, my dear,’ said Ducarrig sweetly. ‘ Sleepy people are negatively agreeable ; they don’t bore you, and they are self-sufficing ; they entertain themselves ! Perhaps our guests will accept my solitary efforts and will overlook our joint faults of omission and commission ! ’

Lord Ducarrig delivered himself of the apology in his most Johnsonian manner, and the smile with which he turned to Eileen as he ended, had in it the quality of the flourish that some writers add to their signatures.

‘ Touching humility, isn’t it ? ’ said Car. It seemed to Dan that she exaggerated the languid drawl with

which she sometimes spoke. ‘There’s always the risk of talking in one’s sleep, though, and saying one of the things that are better left unsaid ! There are so many things of that sort, aren’t there, Arnold ? Perhaps I had better try and keep awake, after all, even at the risk of being a bore. It’s not fair to leave everything on your shoulders !’

‘Hammond, give her ladyship some more champagne,’ said Ducarrig to the butler. He leaned back in his chair, and fixing his eyeglass in his eye, regarded his wife. ‘Perhaps we can induce a little artificial gaiety !’ he went on. ‘These confounded red shades of yours deprive me of the pleasure of seeing you, my dear,’ he ended, with a laugh, that, to Dan, listening in acute discomfort, made the words sound an insult.

‘Serious loss, isn’t it ?’ Car said jeeringly. ‘No, Hammond, I don’t want any more, thank you.’

‘Ah, well, one has to learn to do without many things,’ Ducarrig went on affably. ‘One acquires philosophy ! Married men have their trials, Palliser, as well as their joys, as you may possibly discover for yourself some day ! But even for such poor devils as I, there are sometimes alleviations !’

The eyeglass focused the party in succession, ending with Eileen. Dan, sitting up very straight, ignored the allusion to himself, and felt his fist clench in his lap in impotent rage. He could think of no reply save that which it might supply, and this reply, owing to the interventions of civilised society, could not be indulged in. Ducarrig emptied his wineglass as though he had proposed a toast. Eileen, who was more successful in a *tête-à-tête* than when encumbered with an audience, laughed nervously, and kept her eyes on her plate. There was a moment of silence, during

which, had lightning flashed and thunder rolled, neither of the guests would have been surprised.

Then Car said tranquilly, looking at the watch on her wrist, ‘Twenty minutes to ! The Angel on time as usual. I wonder what he thinks of us ! ’

‘ Finds the ladies charming, no doubt ! ’ said Ducarrig, letting fall his eyeglass and motioning to the butler to give him more wine. No one could say that Ducarrig drank, but his friends admitted that ‘he took his whack.’ ‘We mere men don’t count ! Have some more champagne, Palliser ? ’

‘ No thanks,’ said Dan, so curtly, that Car, angry though she was, found it difficult not to laugh. She was used to these disturbances of the domestic atmosphere. This was a mere veiled reverberation of what had happened before dinner. Arnold had been rather more horrible than usual then. She averted her thoughts from what he had said. While she exerted herself to talk to Dan, she was remembering a similar small dinner, during which the good-looking A.D.C. had closed his career at Santa Caterina by throwing a glass of port in his Chief’s face. ‘And I laughed and said, “Any port in a storm ! ” ’ : thought Car, ‘Please goodness I should have more sense now ! But Sir Daniel’s not in love with me as poor Gerald Guthrie was, and he’s not violent—at least—’ Again she averted her mind ; this was not the moment to dwell upon abstractions.

The moon had risen over the lake as Dan, at Lady Ducarrig’s side, walked down the path from the house to the boat-quay. He recalled the evening when the misty moonlight had beguiled him to wander across the Big Lawn, and he had listened to her singing. He had asked her to sing this evening ; she had said she

was too tired, and, having definitely refused, she had drifted to the piano and had played a little, and had ended by singing divinely ; as, he told himself, she alone could sing.

As he now walked beside her, he was saying to himself that it was her voice that made him mad, that filled the air for him with this feeling of something imminent and overwhelming, and set his heart beating as if it wanted to suffocate him. He knew now what a horse feels like who has been over-bitted, and has had his head braced to his chest with the training-harness. Something in him, he didn't know what, trying to get free, to assert itself. He thought of how, in the spring, he had been passing through the stable-yard, and, at his step, the young chestnut mare had uttered so poignant a cry to him, that he had gone into her loose box and found that her head had been strapped in until the veins on her neck stood out, and the sweat was making dark and rough her silky coat. Her beautiful wild eyes tore his very soul with their distress. He felt as if he could never be fast enough in setting her free. What the mare had felt then he was feeling now, and there was no one to set him free. Why had he asked Lady Ducarrig to sing ? It always broke him up. To-night there had been a shake in her voice, a reed-like break in its velvet melody. Whatever devilment Ducarrig had been up to at dinner, he had hurt her. Dan told himself that she would die before she acknowledged that she had been hurt, but her voice had surrendered the truth. That was it. That was what had worked him up like this (that and her singing)—that damnable fellow and his deliberate insults—no, not exactly insults, something behind the words, in the

manner. It had been like seeing her slashed in the face with a whip, an invisible whip, that you couldn't snatch at, but you could see the marks it left——

‘Dan,’ said Car Ducarrig, and paused an instant.

(She was calling him Dan!—that was his heart again—it stopped dead that time; she had said once that she would do so, but he had never dared to remind her.)

‘Dan,’ she said again, ‘I want you to forget that—that slight *fracas* at dinner—’ (Then she knew he had felt it!) ‘It really meant nothing. Arnold was put out about something before dinner, goodness knows what! Very little does it—then he has to work it off on some one, and no doubt a wife is intended by God to be a safety-valve!’

Dan could hear that there was something forced in the level laziness of her voice. To the ambient air, high above her head, he muttered something incoherent, intended to assure her that he had been aware of nothing, and ended by saying abruptly :

‘Thank you for calling me Dan!’

‘It came quite easily,’ said Car; ‘with some people it is impossible *not* to say Mr. or Mrs. You feel you’ve got to ring and knock before you can get in.’

Dan did not speak for a moment, then he said : ‘You know I feel as if every hall-door—yes! and a great many farm-house and cabin doors too, were shut against me, and that I might ring and knock till I was dead and they wouldn’t open!’ He broke off and drew a quick breath. Then he began hurriedly, ‘If you could know how—how grateful I am—what a difference your being here makes! Do you mind my talking to you? Don’t let me bore you! But when I hear you sing, I know you will understand

everything—I've no right to bother you—only, that night on the hill, St. John's Eve—and not only then—I've thought you might be a little interested in the things I'm keen about—' He stopped his halting sentences to draw a breath (why couldn't his heart go easy?).

' I'm interested in *everything*,' said Car, with that sound in her voice that he knew, and strained towards as unconsciously as a cold and outcast sleeper strains towards the warmth of the camp-fire.

Just in front were Eileen and Lord Ducarrig. Eileen's laughter came back to them with the scent of Ducarrig's cigar. They had arrived at the boat-quay, and Eileen called to Dan to help to put the boat in the water.

' Tell me anything you like,' said Car quickly—' later——'

The boat was soon made ready. Lady Ducarrig and Eileen got in. Dan, in his white tennis flannels, looking like an enormous ghost in the moonlight, waited on the shore to shove off.

' Aren't you coming, Lord Ducarrig? In your own nice new boat! ' Eileen asked. Dan thought her voice sounded proprietary and pert.

' No, alas, no! I'm too old for these midnight water-parties! I shall see you to-morrow, eh? That's settled? Good! Don't drown my wife if you can help it, Palliser! '

Dan was already climbing over the boat's bows, with one knee on the gunwale, while, with a leg of immeasurable length, he pushed the boat out into the deep water.

CHAPTER XIX

FAIRHAVEN POINT, with its outpost pines, had been left behind. Eileen's white figure had fluttered away up the lawn into the mist of moonshine and had vanished like a wraith into nothingness, and the long silver levels of the moon-lighted lake lay before them. Dan had pulled out from the shore and the reeds into the open water, now his leisurely strokes slackened. He jerked the sculls out of the rowlocks and ceased.

'Just a moment,' he said apologetically, 'it seems a pity to go in. May I wait a bit?'

Car assented abstractedly, as if but half her attention were his. Silence had held them both since they had started on the homeward way; now that he had broken it he felt that he had done wrong. He said no more. The boat pressed on, carrying her way ever more slowly, then she lay still in the radiance that was over all, that strange radiance that, instead of illumining and revealing what it shines on, as does the sun, transmutes into the mystery of its own silver the things it loves, and blots all else into impenetrable blackness.

The break in the measured movement, the ordered creak and grunt of the oars, the little splash at the boat's bows, followed by this utter stillness, seemed to give pause to Car's thoughts.

'I wonder if we're in this world or the next,' she said languidly. 'It's all unsubstantial, as if the boat and you and I were the only realities left. Wouldn't

it be a relief if we found we had glided peacefully into the next plane, and were done with this one? It isn't much of a place, you know, is it ? '

The moonlight was full on her face ; she looked very tired ; her voice had lost its habitual easy self-confidence, and that reedy note, that so shook him in her singing was sounding in it. It seemed to Dan as if to-night he were seeing her for the first time ; as if, in this loneliness of beauty, the screens that each soul hides itself behind had fallen. Even in this last hour, while he had quietly sculled the punt down to Fairhaven, with his two passengers talking idly in the stern, a screen had fallen for him. He thought it fell when she put her hand on his shoulder to steady herself as she got into the boat. But it mattered little when the moment had come. The marvel was that he had not known it sooner. Now, with exultation and with despair, he saw his heart, and, in seeing it, resolved that the screens should be again raised round it, higher than ever.

' Do *you* think the world's good enough ? Do *you* think it's worth while ? ' Car went on ; she laughed, as if at herself for pressing the question. ' Yes, of course you do ! You're young ! Don't answer silly questions.'

' I don't see that being young helps you to put up with what you don't like—rather the contrary ! ' said Dan in his deep, matter-of-fact voice ; ' and as far as my being young goes—I—I—you—' he stammered, trying to collect his thoughts, and to repudiate the imputation of being younger than she.

' I'm exactly a hundred years older than you are ! ' said Car with another laugh, ' but possibly on the next plane you may catch up to me and find there isn't

so very much difference between us, after all ! Or perhaps it will be the other way—the years will fall off me as a garment, and I shall find myself eight-and-twenty instead of a hundred and twenty-eight, as I am now ! I should prefer that, you know ! '

' As long as we were both on the same plane it wouldn't matter what the difference was ! ' Dan muttered under his breath.

Car, wrapped in her own thought, did not hear him.

' I've a friend who is a Spiritualist,' she said meditatively. ' I think I'm one too—I am, when I'm with her. *They* say we shall find ourselves at our best over there, and that the people we shall be with will be the ones we have an affinity with. Rather attractive, isn't it ? But don't you think we shall want some of the others too, now and then, just for ginger, you know ? '

Dan, in his turn, had not attended to what she was saying. He was staring inwardly into his soul at that wild, hopeless, naked, beautiful truth, that he had so suddenly discovered was dwelling there. He must master its wildness, and clothe its nakedness and drive it out ; its hopelessness it would leave behind it. . . . But not just yet. It was too recent a guest. When every pulse was drumming welcome, and his blood ringing joybells in his ears for the wonder and the glory of it, how could he drive it out ? He sat quiet, fighting for control. Car continued her languid speculations.

' I've never tried anything myself—though I am told I may be a little bit of a medium—but I've no one over there I want to talk to. If I go over first, will you try and talk to me—Dan ? '

Dan told himself that if she spoke his name again,

in that voice, there would be no help for it, every screen would go down with a crash. He pulled himself together.

' If you were to " go over " first ? Do you mean—die first ? *That* couldn't happen ! '

' Why not ? Anything can happen ! Let's make a compact ! Whichever of us gets out of this sphere first must try and communicate with the other ! Will you ? If you have the luck to get away first, will you leave heaven for a few minutes, now and then, and give me a word or two ? Do promise ! ' Again she laughed.

' It wouldn't be heaven for me if you weren't there,' said Dan deliberately. (If only his heart would steady down ! He pressed his left hand to his side, and gripped the gunwale of the punt with his right.) ' Wherever I am—if you call me !——'

Car was startled. He had failed to keep his voice steady. She was wise, but Wisdom is not always justified of her children, and is least so when they wilfully close their eyes and ignore the inevitable. Her eyes were open now, and she knew that what had happened to her more than once or twice in the past had happened again. She had lost a friend . . . her nice, innocent Sir Daniel ! . . . She would not face the sequel now.

' I'm talking rubbish ! ' she said, rather hurriedly. ' I hope I shan't have to call you until you're so old and deaf that you won't hear ! Tell me what you were beginning to speak about just now, before we got into the boat—the things you said you were so keen about——'

Dan took hold of himself, as a strong, wounded rider will use his last strength in keeping his horse straight. He began to speak of his expiring projects,

his waning hopes, his growing discouragements, trying to give them their due value and importance, as if they had not, in this last hour even, become for him faint and far off and futile.

A cloud came over the moon, and a thin wind swept the brightness from the water. He looked at his watch.

'It's getting cold,' he said. 'I ought not to keep you out here boring you with these things——'

He got out the sculls and began to row back to the boat-quay, with one foolish thought filling his mind. Would she put her hand on his shoulder again when she was getting out of the boat ?

CHAPTER XX

THE Agricultural Show, which was easily the greatest event of the year for Eskragh and the surrounding district, was now an institution of many years' standing. It was, on the whole, prosperous, but, as has been admitted, its hold on solvency was precariously dependent on the weather. There had been nearly a week of heavy rainfall, and since the habit of rain is one which is, for the southern Irish climate, a difficult one to break, only those of the committee who kept their eyes fixed on the silver lining of all clouds, metaphorical or otherwise, could derive much comfort from the fact that the Grand Stand had been recently roofed. 'And what good is it for it to be roofed when the devil a one at all 'll come if it's wet? And if it's fine they'll not want it! Money thrown away on grandeurment, that's all it is!' said the pessimists and the rationalists who thought that silver linings were only worthy of consideration where pockets were concerned, and held that once visitors to the Show had passed the turn-stiles the subsequent proceedings were between themselves and that inscrutable Providence that is responsible for the vagaries of the weather.

Such silver lining as, on the day of the Show, might have been allotted to the clouds was, unfortunately, imperceptible. Rain, thick, fine, and quiet, the sort of rain that has come to stay, had begun at daybreak, and was now continuing, coming down with dreary patience, so that the optimists fell silent, and their

opponents indulged in the curious exultation with which pessimists accept disaster. Grim grey clouds roofed the show-ground as solidly as did the corrugated iron cover the Grand Stand's empty benches. With the exception, perhaps, of the splendour of that iron-roofed Grand Stand, the arrangements of the show-yard could not be accused of an excessive luxury or extravagance. The horses stood in open pent-house sheds, shivering in their sheets, with drips from the iron roof running down the long noses that they persistently pushed forth from beneath its scant shelter. The cattle, even less favoured than they, huddled, muddied and miserable, in pens in the open. 'Sure what harm 'd a drop of rain do them?' the economists of the committee had said, and had grudged even the pent-house roofs to the horses. The tents of the purveyors of refreshments were thronged, to the just indignation of their proprietors, by a damp crowd who had no intention of refreshing, and formed an impregnable barrier against possible customers. The comparative shelter of the Grand Stand had the disadvantage of costing an extra shilling, and was sparsely availed of, those young ladies of Eskragh who, on happier occasions, were wont to fill it, beamingly and brilliantly, to its uttermost plank, having—the new roof notwithstanding—recognised the incompatibility of heavy rain and best hats, and stayed at home (a fact on which the pessimists did not fail to comment at the next committee meeting).

The judging of the horses took place in the centre of the Jumping Enclosure in front of the Grand Stand. Small knots of men, identical as soldiers in their uniform of pot-hats, long, drab, waterproofs, leather gaiters, and umbrellas, stood about in dreary

impassivity, while the animals to whose honour and renown the Show was chiefly dedicated, with tails tucked in, and ears laid back, exhibited their charms with a soured parsimony that ignored the stimulation of whip or spur. The judges, two elderly horsedealers, with faces as hard as their hats, stolidly and conscientiously did their work, 'pulling in' horses for inspection from the procession that moved round them in revolving wretchedness, like sinners in a Circle of Purgatory; sending them back, humiliated, to the circling ranks, or, in the case of a chosen one, climbing stiffly on to its wet saddle, and beating it round the ring with a flapping wet umbrella.

Dan Palliser, looking gaunt and gigantic in his long waterproof coat, with his presidential rosette weeping green tears on his drab breast, was leaning on the rail of the ring, watching his chestnut mare being run by Heskin, saddleless, up and down before the judges, an exhausting process for which, in fairness, the groom should receive considerably more marks than the horse. The examination had just ended satisfactorily, and Tara had been put aside with the selected prize-winners, when Dan felt a touch on his arm.

'I didn't see you since the day we were back at Knockariska, Mr. Palliser,' said Father Hugh Macnamara. 'I hope you're well?'

'I'm bothered,' said Dan wearily, 'I was thinking of going to see you.'

'Well, couldn't we have a talk now?' said the priest. 'I'd be only too glad if I could be any help at all to you.'

The Grand Stand was behind them; they mounted its steep stairs and seated themselves on one of its damp, empty benches.

'Did you hear the Sinn Feiners came to me for money for their "army" three nights ago?' Dan began. 'Four of them. They came in the evening, just after dinner—strangers; anyhow, their faces were blacked and I didn't know their voices. They were quite civil. The police had taken my guns, of course, and I told them so, but they wanted money. They asked me for fifty pounds. My mother was there. She was very angry, and let them have her opinion of them; but I must say for them they were quiet enough.'

'What did you say?'

'I told them their army was only making bad worse, and—oh, I needn't tell you all I said; anyhow, I refused to give them the money. I said I had fought for the King, and I wasn't going to pay men to fight against him.'

'Well?'

'Well, they went off very quietly, and said they saw my point. But that night two of my bullocks were stolen. Driven off the land and taken God knows where. It would have been cheaper to have given them the fifty quid.'

'They were sold at Ardagh Fair yesterday, I make no doubt,' said the priest in his quiet voice. 'I was near Ardagh yesterday on a sick call, and a woman told me cattle were driving hard all night on the roads, and a stray "Polly" broke away, she supposed, for it was on their land on the morning of the fair.'

'It isn't so much the value of the beasts, though that's a bad enough loss,' Dan went on, 'but the hopelessness of everything. I thought this part of the country, at least, was fairly quiet, and I thought—'

he hesitated—‘I thought they knew that—well, you know, Father Hugh—I have a good deal of sympathy with them. I’m called a rebel by my own lot, and I’m treated as an enemy by the rebels !’

‘Tis impossible to stop half-way,’ said Father Hugh, nodding his head reflectively, without looking at Dan.

‘But good heavens ! You talk about “half-way,” I haven’t even started ! I’m not on the road ! I’ve told them at the Board, I’ve told every man I’ve spoken to—and I’ve spoken to dozens of them—that I’ve *no* politics ! That I’m a farmer, simply and solely, out for the betterment of the country ! And then I’m to be bullied into taking sides !’

‘Ah, Mr. Palliser, you’re not the only one that’s being bullied ! Believe me, there are worse sufferers than you !’ broke in the priest. ‘Poor people who haven’t taken sides any more than yourself ! I could tell you of plenty of poor decent creatures of small farmers, that don’t know what way they can live at all ! Harried and distracted by those English police by day, and by the Sinn Feiners by night ! I know a little lonely farm-house, high up on the side of Coolowen Mountain. Well, there are fifteen lads on the run on that mountain. The police—them new “Black and Tans,” as they’re calling them, I believe—are hunting them all day and every day, and threatening the poor man that owns the house, and his wife, saying they could give up the boys if they chose—and how could they give them up ? And if they could, itself, what’d save them from being shot the next night by the Sinn Feiners ? It’s hard to blame them, and they having no protection good or bad !’

Father Hugh paused ; in his indignation he had

raised the tone of his voice ; he looked round, and went on in a lower key, ‘ And then, by night, those fifteen boys will come down to the house, and will turn the poor man and the wife out of the bed itself, and get into it themselves by turns, to warm themselves ! And they’ll eat all those unfortunate creatures will have in the house for themselves ! Do you wonder that that poor man is distracted ? “ If it isn’t one side ’ll shoot me and rob me it’s the other ! ” he says ; “ or maybe it’s to burn me little house over me head they’ll do ! ” says he. “ Sure there’s no protection for man or beast ! ” ’

‘ Between the devil and the R.I.C. ! ’ said Dan, with a short laugh.

‘ You’d say the remedy was worse than the disease, as bad as it is ! ’ said the priest. ‘ If there’s a word said of the police now, the old women are ready to run up the chimney, and the young ones too ! The same as a cat with a dog after her ! ’

Dan groaned ; then he drew an impatient breath, full of restlessness, almost of fever, and stood up.

‘ The War was peace to what we’re having now ! ’ he said.

‘ There’s worse to come, I’m thinking ! ’ Father Hugh said, sighing. Dan made no reply. ‘ I’m sorry to my heart the Sinn Feiners didn’t leave you alone, Mr. Palliser. I’ve never lost a chance of correcting that scandal that somehow went about that ’twas you brought the police down on Eugene Cashen. It went all over the country.’

‘ They’ll believe any lie,’ said Dan bitterly. ‘ It’s the truth they’ve no use for.’

‘ Ah, Mr. Palliser, it’s hard to blame them—not this generation, anyhow. It’s lies they were fed on,

and bred on. They never heard the truth, and now they're deaf to the voice of the Church! They wouldn't listen now though one rose from the dead !'

' If anyone *did* rise from the dead, he wouldn't come back to Ireland, anyhow ! ' said Dan. ' He'd be a fool if he did ! '

' It grieves me to hear you talk this way,' said Father Hugh, looking anxiously at Dan. ' I do assure you that there's no man in this district has as much influence as yourself. I never thought to hear you speak like this. Don't give them up, Mr. Palliser! This is Ireland's black hour; what will become of her if all her best sons turn their backs on her ? '

Dan thought of his vow. ' It won't be that I'll turn my back on Ireland,' he said grimly. ' It'll be the other way about more likely ! '

Father Hugh, looking up at his face saw the pain in his eyes, and said to himself he had never known a man that took his politics as hard as this one.

Since that night on the lake, nearly a week ago, Dan had summoned to his strengthening all the austerity and self-control that were his, and had bound himself to keep away from Monalour House until he had, as he said to himself, faced the position ; a phrase with no very definite meaning, but, like many others, useful as a styptic. He knew he must meet Car at the Show. He told himself that that should be the term of his resolution. In the meantime he had to learn to live with this well of fire that had discovered itself within him. It had been lighted—he knew it now—at Baal's altar ; it was a pagan fire that would burn on, consuming and destroying, and would never be extinguished.

Probably no man is aware of his own fanaticism. The streak of fury that makes the zealot is blent with the inmost tides of being. He in whom it exists, though he may strain his soul through a sieve, and analyse all that is in it, can never isolate that ultimate thing, that is unconscious of itself and is deeper than any attribute. During this week that had passed the zealot had been blinded, stunned, drugged, anything that will express the overthrow of Dan Palliser, patriot and reformer. The thought of Car Ducarrig was with him, a pillar of cloud by day, of fire by night. He had seen her once only during that week of probation. Over the suave slopes of the Big Lawn, patterned with their dignified limes and horse-chestnuts, she was galloping her bay horse. Dan had stood watching her. The bay horse gleamed in the afternoon sun, her white terrier was racing after her, her white linen coat caught the light. There was a windy sky behind her, and the long scarves of cloud were turning saffron in the western light. Dan's eyes, not usually slow to see beauty, were only aware that it was she ; all his forces were absorbed in a determination to bring her to him. Consciously he gathered all the power of his will ; he fixed his gaze upon her, charging his eyes with the message to her to come to him. If she came to him that would be no breaking of his vow. He stood rigid, with fists clenched, concentrating, forcing his will on her unconscious mind. She turned the bay horse. She began to canter towards where he stood, hidden, as he knew, in the shade of the laurels. . . . Some one called to her from the terrace. She swung the horse round, he wheeled like a bird on the wing, and galloped away. . . .

Curses on them !

'Whatever sickness Master Dan 'll get,' his nurse had said when he was a little boy, 'it'll hit him hot and heavy ! If it was only a little thorn in his finger itself, it'd turn into a pig's foot on him !'

Now there had fallen upon him an illness that had never before come his way, and hot and heavy indeed it had hit him.

The rain fell and fell. Dan wandered moodily about the wide, wet, grassy stretches of the Show ground, meeting now and then a few of the men and women of his own class who had, like himself, come early to see the judging, regardless of the weather. Through his absorption in what was filling his thoughts, he was aware of a restraint, even a chill, among those to whom he spoke. It was a time of Ireland's stormy history when no two Irish people of the same class could speak together for five minutes without irrepressibly diverging into politics. But Dan found that the bad weather, and the pity of it, and the consequent state of the roads, exhausted his friends' topics of conversation with him. Even these innocuous and uncontroversial themes received but perfunctory handling ; the tendency seemed to be to cease, and to move on as soon as the scantest courtesy permitted. His colleagues of the Rural District Council were scarcely more cordial. At no time had their public recognition of him erred on the side of effusiveness ; their positions as official representatives of Sinn Fein might be jeopardised by over-ostentatious intimacy with an ex-officer of what they were careful to speak of as 'a foreign army,' however liberal his views. But, informally, their friendliness never before had failed. Among those who had no responsibility of office weighing on them he fared but little better. Two

men turned their backs upon him ; others gave him the impression that they were waiting apprehensively for him to compromise them in some way best known to themselves, and were eager to escape from his society.

He met Baby Bullet, Vice-President of the Agricultural Society, wearing the yellow rosette that proclaimed his office, and realised that the Baby's umbrella and a bundle of catalogues were being employed as a reason for evading the necessity of shaking hands. 'With all my heart !' thought Dan. 'Same here !' He nodded, and was moving on, but the Baby stopped him.

'I wish to inquire of you, Mr. Palliser,' he began, with dignity, 'if it is, as I hear, your intention to loan out your engine for the thrashing, and such purposes, this harvest ?'

'I'm thinking of making arrangements by which the members of the Farmers' Society can use it,' said Dan stiffly. 'Why do you ask ?'

'Because, Mr. Palliser, I consider it is a monstrous thing that a gentleman in your position should use the wealth that has been bestowed upon him to interfere with the rootheen of the neighbourhood, and to take the bread out of the mouths of the poor !' replied the Baby, wheezing hard with the effort of combining oratory and indignation.

'What do you mean ?'

'I mean that my thrashing-machine that has been—as I might say—the prop and stay of this district, and has always done the work well and effeeciently, at a reasonable price, will now be boycotted ! I consider, Mr. Palliser, that this is an unfriendly act on your part, and not what I have deserved from one whom I have lost no opportunity of obleeeging !'

How and when had the Baby obliged him? Dan was unaware of any obligation.

The Baby did not give him time to speak. 'I say nothing,' he continued, on a rising squeak of rage, 'of the Co-operative Store that I am told you are proposing to establish—a mean and unworthy method of ruining hard-working traders—but—'

'Then if you mean to say nothing, I presume this conversation is at an end, Mr. Coyne,' said Dan. 'Good-morning!'

He stalked away, leaving Baby Bullet, his open mouth full of an undelivered denunciation, to regret a conversational formula that had never before betrayed him, and to determine not again to employ it where there was a possibility of its being taken in a literal sense.

Dan said to himself that he was having a delightful day. First Father Hugh, dejected and pessimistic; then a general and comprehensive cold shouldering from his old friends, followed by snubbing from the farmers, and finally the lid put on the soup-tureen, in which he felt himself to be, by the egregious Baby Bullet! All that surprised him was how little he felt what, a short time ago, would have filled him with despair. He had no room for despair to-day. All these things were like pictures seen at a cinematograph. They occurred, they passed, they were not.

While he walked round the show-ground, looking at the exhibits, while he argued with Jimmy Ryan on the merits of the milking-machine (operating on a stuffed Friesian cow, horrible to behold) or condoled with Tom McLoughlen on the defeat (which he had confidently anticipated) of the young bull—('what can we expect, Tom, with short-horn judges!') and

Tom had replied, solemnly, ' Before God, and Mr. Ryan, it was throwing money in the mud to go buying the like o' that bull ! '), while he congratulated Heskin on Tara's First Prize, through every moment of that age-long morning, his heart was shaking him, making him almost sick with its violence, because in two hours, in one hour, in half an hour, he would see Car again.

CHAPTER XXI

IN spite of the rain the Grand Stand was filling, and the circle of men and boys round the rails of the Jumping Enclosure grew deeper and more impenetrable every moment. The Jumping Competitions began at three o'clock, and cards of the events were now being sold. Dan read : ' No. 1. Mr. Palliser's Tara, ch. m., by Wild Minstrel—Lady Meath. No. 2. Lady Ducarrig's Gambler, b.g., by Speculation—Queen of Hearts.' She was safe to come, whatever the weather, if it were only to see her horse jump.

Heskin came to him into the shed in which the young mare was standing.

' I took her a turn around the ground just now, sir, to soople her, and the dealers were like flies after her ! She never was in better heart ! There's no fear but you'll find she's agreeable to jump the bank now ! '

' She made a pretty good mess of it the last time she tried it ! ' said Dan, regarding Tara with disfavour.

Heskin shot a glance at him.

' She's a different mare now, sir ! Look at the work she done this last fortnight ! I'll engage she'll make nothing of it ! Let you remember to keep her to the western end, the way you'll get a better sweep to come at it.' He pulled a cloth out of a bundle, and began to rub the mare's face that was wet from the drips of the roof of the shed ; then, with secret hissings, he applied it to general polishings of her already immaculate person. ' There's only but the one here

that might beat her,' he went on in a cautious whisper, turning his cunning, wizened face round over his shoulder and looking at Dan, while he rubbed down the mare's legs, ' and that's this bay horse that's next to us here. He got a prize jumping in Dublin last year. He might beat her on forr'm.'

' Do you mean Lady Ducarrig's horse ? '

' To be sure I do, sir, what else ? ' said Heskin, incredulous that the mere sight of the bay horse's nose had not established for Dan his identity. ' And Locksley says her ladyship is to ride herself, and sure won't the judges give it to her, right or wrong ! '

Dan looked into the next stall. There was obviously a side-saddle under the dust sheet that covered the bay horse. Good heavens ! It wasn't fit that she should ride here ! How could Ducarrig let her do such a thing ? The best horse may make a mistake at a show——

' What a day ! ' said Car Ducarrig's voice behind him. ' I'm going to ride, so I was bound to come, in spite of the rain ; so are you, aren't you ? Will they send us round in couples, or one by one ? Couples, I hope, they jump so much freer.'

' I beg of you not to ride,' said Dan intensely. ' It's a beastly course, and it's all sodden and greasy from the rain, and, and—he beat his brain for an argument that might move her—' you might be sent round with some fool that would cannon into you—knock you off the bank, anything ! Wouldn't you let Locksley ride him ? Or Heskin here—he's a nice light weight—wouldn't you change your mind about it ? '

His eyes implored her, saying things more appealing than his stumbling lips could utter.

Car met his look, and in meeting it knew that things

were not well with him. The trouble that was in his face was not new to her ; it wouldn't be the first face in which she had recognised its appeal, and had rejected it. Certainly, if it were only for his own sake, she must not let him turn her from her purpose. 'I won't give in to him, it wouldn't be fair !' she thought. His intensity was discomposing ; there was a force in him that she was not prepared for. A faint colour came into her face.

'No, no !' she said, with a laugh that was not quite like her own, 'I'm keen to ride ! I know Gambler well. He *can't* make a mistake. Please don't ask me to put any one else on him, he'd be so offended !'

One of the stewards for the jumping hurried up. 'Are you ready, please ? You've got your numbers ? One and Two—you're to go round in pairs by the numbers. The judges are ready, don't delay, please.' He hurried on.

'You see there's no time to change,' said Car quickly. 'Pull the horse out, Locksley.'

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Dan sat down in his saddle and got a pull on the mare's head. She had treated him to a buck, as they landed off the bank, of a singularly exacting variety, but having survived it, he could now watch the bay horse and his rider. Fast as he rode, his thoughts rushed faster, following Car as she led him round the course.

How well she was riding ! How gorgeously she had led Tara over the bank ! 'Ladies first !' she had said, sailing out ahead of him and over it as if it were nothing at all ! A big-jumped horse that ! And the mare was going all the better for the lead he was giving

her ; she had made nothing of the bank—(and that was the devil of a buck she had given after it !)—just mad to follow the horse. . . . Steady, mare, steady will you, you fool ! Give him room, he'll slacken up a bit for the wall—Oh, well over ! . . . That *is* a good horse ! He couldn't make a mistake if he tried ! . . . Now then, Tara, our turn ! Steady, mare ! . . . By Jove, that was a big jump ! I thought we were never coming down again out of the sky ! No fear we knocked any stones, anyhow,—Stars, more likely ! . . . Now for the water ! . . . By Jove, she's putting on the pace ! . . . Well over ! She's done the round now ! . . . That's a real good horse ! No wonder the crowd are yelling ! Come along, mare, if you jump half as big as he did you'll do ! . . . Good ! We did that all right ! Wo-ho, my pet ! That's enough for this time—Both numbers up ? Good business ! You'll have to do it again presently !—‘Here, Heskin, catch hold of her—Lead her about—’

Dan's blood was up, he was like another man. He pitched himself off Tara's back and went up to Car, his face flushed, and a new light in his eyes. She had begun to move her horse about in the clear space behind the starting point for the hurdle which was the first jump of the course.

‘Bravo !’ she said beaming at him, ‘we did a great round, didn't we ! Now, what do you think of Gambler ?’

For that moment, the troubles that had filled Dan's mind were forgotten ; he was just the other half in the wonderful fellowship of horse and rider ; he was glowing with the self-same joy in effort, in speed, perhaps also in danger, that was making Tara dance round Heskin like a big fish being brought up to the

bank. He looked back at Car with shining eyes, transfigured.

Heskin came towards them, clearing his way through the crowd, partly by the aid of the young mare, who was sidling, dancing, and switching her long tail, partly by that of his equally long tongue.

'Stand out now! Make way there! Stand out, I tell you! Mind yourselves now! Kick? No, she do *not* kick, but she'll defend herself with her heels if she'll want to! Mind yourself now, I tell ye, young fella! I won't be answerable for the mare if ye have her squeez up this way!' He pushed through into the open space. 'That's a grand horse, my lady! Ah, he's too good for us! But the young mare proved good, too! Sure I seen every shoe she has on her shining in the air, she went that high over the wall!'

'I never saw a bigger jump! I was afraid Gambler was cutting it too fine.' The rain and the ride had brought unusual colour to Car's face. Dan was standing at her horse's shoulder. She looked at him for agreement, and surprised in his eyes such an adoration as startled her.

'This won't do!' she thought. 'It's very becoming to his looks, but otherwise it's unadvisable!' She turned to her groom.

'Is his lordship here yet, Locksley?'

'Yes, m'lady, I saw him in the Stand with Miss Caulfield and Admiral Caulfield, just before you went out to jump.'

'Just in time to see us cover ourselves with glory!' said Car to Dan. 'How nice for them!' She moved away and began to walk her horse to and fro in the space grudgingly vouchsafed by the crowd of admirers.

The waiting interval dragged slowly by, but,

sharing the common lot of intervals, however harassing, it ended at last.

'Ye'll not forget to keep to the western end of the bank, sir?' murmured Heskin, as he held the stirrup for Dan to remount, 'and her ladyship should do the same. It's badly built. The eastern end'd melt under you.'

The rain had nearly ceased as numbers One and Two rode out for their next round.

'It's between them two!' said the crowd, watching narrowly. 'Begob the lady should have it! That's a lovely cut of a horse she have!'

The starting flag was waved.

'Let's go round abreast this time,' said Car, picking up her reins, 'there's room enough.'

'Keep to the left of the bank; Heskin says the right side is rotten,' Dan answered hastily, while Tara stood up on her hind legs, mad to start.

The flag went down.

In a flash they were over the furze hurdle and were galloping at the bank. The six horses that had jumped it since the first round had not improved its condition. All had attacked it on its left, or western end, and the grass in front of the ditch was trampled into mud, and much of the bank was knocked away. Only the right side was uninjured. Dan had started on Car's right, and a trifle behind her, but at the bank he was leading, with Tara pulling double. The green and unbroken end of the bank faced him, and, remembering Heskin's warning, he gave the mare a touch of the spur to ensure her not dwelling on it. The stimulant was not needed. In her young pride and enthusiasm she flung herself into the air with a deer-like spring, and had she not retained enough sense and self-control to

remind her to kick back at the bank on the landing side, she would have disgraced herself in the eyes of the judges by flying it. A tremendous roar of applause greeted her exploit, and a still wilder shout followed. Gambler's splendid quarters had lifted him, unfalteringly, out of the trampled ground in front of the bank, but on its broken summit the footing was bad ; there was an instant of pause, a staggering scramble, and then from the hundreds of watchers came another great shout of relief as the horse got his feet under him, and, with a mighty spring, was away off the bank and following hard after the young mare.

At the wall they were side by side, and were both high in air over it at the same instant. They raced at the water jump, while the roar of the crowd strengthened with each instant. Up and out sprang the two good horses, flinging themselves at the low hedge with the wide strip of water beyond it. Over the water they sailed, still side by side, and landing, shoulder to shoulder, they galloped in through the shouting people.

Almost immediately a steward came running to them with a message from the judges. ' You're to jump the bank again, please, one at a time, for the first and second prizes.'

' I'll go first,' said Car, still breathless from the round, ' I'll try the east side. It can't be worse than the other.'

They rode together round the hurdle, and Car set Gambler going, while Dan sat still and watched her.

Did Gambler's hind feet slip on the greasy brink of the drain ? Dan couldn't be sure. He had gone at the jump temperately and collectedly, and he had

got his forefeet on top all right, but, as the hind feet struck for their hold on the bank, a couple of what appeared to be detached sods slipped under them ; the horse slipped with them, he hung, struggling to make good, for an instant or two, and then sank back into the gripe, falling over into it on his off side. The whole affair was over in half a minute. Dan was off his mare and at the place almost as the end came, but quick as he was, a swarm of men and boys were through the rails, and were already dragging Car out of the saddle before he could reach her. He struck them right and left and caught her from them.

' Hurt ? ' gasped Dan, with what felt to him like his last breath.

' No, no, not in the least ! '

The power of speech returned to him. ' Make way, you fellows ! Can't you give the lady room to breathe ? ' He swung his great arm furiously and cleared a space.

The skirt of her habit and her boots were covered with mud, she felt shaken, suddenly very tired, almost frightened ; yet it was not the fall that had shaken her. She had seen Dan's face, had felt the thumping of his heart as he held her close to him, and had felt, too, some answering stir in her own heart, some thrill of the nerves in response to the pressure of his strong arm. A presentiment of disaster blackened the air round her, something was closing in—a moment of dizziness came on her, she leaned helplessly against his breast, knowing now, without uncertainty, what it was that caused its fierce rise and fall.

Lord Ducarrig came struggling through the crowd, followed by Admiral Caulfield.

' Is she hurt, Palliser ? ' he called to Dan over the heads of the thronging people.

'Let me go, Dan,' said Car in a low voice. 'I can stand quite well now.'

She moved towards her husband, as far as the crowd permitted her to do so.

'I'm all right, Arnold,' she called to him, 'nothing wrong except that I strained my left ankle a little getting out of the ditch—I wish you'd see to Gambler.'

The gripe was a shallow one. Gambler was very soon hauled out of it, while a clatter of voices declared simultaneously, that he was all right—that he was destroyed, 'twas the feet failed him. 'Arrah, what way is he destroyed?'—'Look at him now, why! Going light he is on the foremost leg!'—'Ah, what's that, but the colour o' lameness! That's no harm to him!'—'He's a grand horse altogether, he'd never fall but for the sods that threw him'—'You-to-hell! What sods? I tell ye 'twas the feet failed him'—'Twas not the feet, 'twas the sods that slipped.'

'What sods?' Ducarrig's cool voice came through the storm.

'There was too loose sods, sir—like stopping two holes they were—there are the holes now for ye!'

A nimble little boy skipped up on to the bank and poked a bare red toe into first one, and then another, of two deep hoof-prints, half filled with earth. Another boy picked up a thick slab of turf from where it had been flung by Gambler's hoofs. 'Twas the way he put the hoofs on the sods and they slipped with him.'

'Clear the course, please!'

The judges' steward came into action. No one was hurt? Why, then, this delay? The judges had to catch their train. Where is Lord Ducarrig? Will her ladyship jump again?

'The horse is lame,' said Ducarrig angrily, ignoring

the form of the question. ‘He certainly shall not jump again.’

‘Then Number One will jump the bank now for the First Prize, and the Second will go to her ladyship,’ said the steward. ‘Now then, clear the course !’

Baby Bullet pushed himself up to the central point.

‘Throw them sods into the ditch, boy,’ he commanded, ‘we want no more accidents here to-day ! If there are any holes in the bank, in the name of God, let them be seen by all concerr’ned !’

‘It’s a pity your committee didn’t see them !’ said Ducarrig, with a black look at Gambler who was being led away. The ‘colour of lameness’ was now clearly discernible.

CHAPTER XXII

MRS. PALLISER was a strong and able walker. Her brother the Admiral's place, Fairhaven, was nearly two miles by the road from the Lake House, while by water it was less than half that distance ; nevertheless, Mrs. Palliser, being unable to row, preferred to walk, since, as she was accustomed to say, she always liked being responsible for herself. She strode along the ill-kept and stony road, using her walking-stick with a prodding action that was peculiar to her, her eyes on the ground, her mind buried in thought so deep that she felt a faint surprise when she found she had already reached the Fairhaven avenue gates.

A man-of-war standard of neatness and propriety governed all things at Fairhaven ; no weed dared to raise its head in the Admiral's garden ; each pebble of its gravelled walks looked as if it were taken up and dusted every morning. Katie de Vere, a rival gardener (whose jealousy must, for that reason, be allowed for), said it was easy to keep a garden neat. Neatness was only a matter of money, but she could *not* see that the Fairhaven flowers were any better than anyone else's ; she only knew, she said, that Dick Caulfield never went to a garden-party that he didn't steal cuttings or seeds or something, and go home with his pockets full. Nor, in this connection, did she hesitate, in congenial society, to add that it was always said in the Navy that he had been the biggest little pirate that ever sailed the China seas, and she had even

been known to compare the Admiral's return from the other side of the globe with that of Orpheus from the underworld—'Orpheus with his *loot*, you know, my dear ! ' she had said.

But Mrs. Palliser, to whom the gibe had been repeated, had said coldly, and with her usual directness, that Katie would have been less facetious had Dick done as she had hoped and expected, and had married her instead of Eleanor.

Mrs. Palliser, having navigated the avenue, a smooth mauve ribbon of flawless gravel, steered a course for the flower-garden, feeling reasonably secure of finding her brother there, and thinking that she would at tea-time have quite as much as she desired of her sister-in-law's society. The Admiral was on his knees doing something imperceptible to a flower-bed, that would, to the lay mind, have seemed to be of unimpeachable propriety. He wore a long blue apron and a pair of old white kid gloves. His tidiness was as supreme as that of his surroundings.

'Well, Georgina, well ! That you ? That's all right ! And what brings you over ? Your own flat feet, I suppose you'll tell me, eh ? ' The Admiral stood up, and removing the kid gloves, put them in a pocket in the apron.

'I've come to talk to you, Dick,' said Mrs. Palliser, ignoring this pleasantry. She sat down on a neighbouring seat and looked at her brother stonily. She had an old-fashioned belief in the superiority of the male mind, which was not incompatible with contempt for its frequent levity, and its often obsession over what she considered to be trifles.

'I hear they raided you the other night ! ' said the Admiral gaily (so *like* Dick to consider it as a joke !)

'The scoundrels ! You know they had a go at me last week ? They did very bad business here ! Two of my South Pacific spears, made of human shin-bones, and a Malay kris ! I handed all my guns over to the police in the spring. I can't so much as shoot those confounded rabbits that are getting into the garden ! They lifted a couple of bullocks off Dan, didn't they ? By George, things are in a nice way in this God-forsaken country ! But you know you can't do anything about it—there's no redress for anything nowadays ! There's no Government !' The Admiral laughed more gaily than ever at this entertaining thought.

'I am entirely aware that we must submit to be pillaged without redress,' replied Mrs. Palliser, with the special compression of her lips and set of her jaw that accompanied any reference on her part to the titular rulers of her country, 'It isn't *that* that I've come about—I can assure you I have no illusions on *that* score ! No !' She considered a little. 'Dick, do you remember what you wrote to me about when I was away ? That talk we had about——'

'Yes, yes !' Admiral Caulfield broke in with an apprehensive glance round the garden. 'Don't talk so loud, my dear, there are people about—the fact is, Georgina, I'm rather going back on that idea—I'm not so sure that it was very sound.'

'And why not, pray ?' demanded his sister with instant fierceness, 'you asked me to suggest it to Dan, and I did so.'

'Well, my dear, my dear,' said the Admiral rather nervously, 'you know it was only tentative, and it has seemed to me since—that Dan—well, Dan——'

'Well, what about Dan ?'

'It may be all a yarn, you know—but if I were

you, I should try and keep him away from Monalour House. They tell me he's there incessantly—that pretty woman there making a fool of him, or he making a fool of himself, I don't know which! Both, probably !'

'Who tell you ?'

'I'm very fond of Dan,' Dan's uncle protested, recognising danger. 'I didn't like to speak to you before—and you know, Georgina, since we *are* on the subject of Dan, you must allow me to say that I think he's going too far in his politics. People tell me he's greatly inclined to sympathize with the rebels—and I must say that I never see his name as having dissented, as they say, from any of that blackguard District Council's disloyal resolutions—and there are all sorts of tales going about that he went to sympathize with a man whose son was shot in that attack on the barracks at Knockariska——'

'If you'll allow me to speak,' said Mrs. Palliser, her lips harder than ever, 'I might say that he went to see Curtin, who is an old tenant, about the Co-operative Society that he is getting up.' She might have come over to talk about Dan's delinquencies, but that was no reason why Dick should repeat lies about him.

'Well, I can't say as to that,' resumed her brother, 'but, upon my soul, I was quite glad to think they raided his beasts!—For the look of the thing, you know, Georgina.'

Mrs. Palliser preserved a rocky silence.

'You know,' the Admiral continued, stilling his conscience's reproach for tale-bearing, as people will, by piling high the accusations, 'that infernal old Coyne—the fat fellow they call the Baby—he boasts—*boasts*,

mind you—that having got Dan on to the Board was all a sort of job, and that Dan, in return, voted for some job of his! It's all over the country! I heard people talking about it at the Show!'

'What people?'

'Now, my dear Georgina,' said her brother, beginning to bluster a little, 'you can't possibly expect me to give people away—of course they say things to me that they couldn't to you!—but there it is! I thought it my duty to tell you these things. And, as a matter o' fact, there's another rather unpleasant yarn going about—I don't know how much you know about that jumping business—when Lady Ducarrig had that fall—?'

'Thank you, Dick,' broke in Mrs. Palliser with intense asperity, 'you're very kind, but possibly *I* can tell *you* something about that. Dan has written to Lady Ducarrig, and sent her the prize. It was that man Ryan, whom I have *never* liked, and Heskin, between them, abetted by that odious Coyne, who took Dan's horse to the show-ground and did the mischief. Perhaps it may surprise you,' she went on bitingly, 'to hear that Dan knew *nothing* of the transaction until Lord Ducarrig wrote to him—I imagine Coyne had given him some garbled version of the facts—a very gentlemanlike letter, quite what I should have expected from Lord Ducarrig; *not* believing the worst as *others* appear to do!'

'Nonsense, Georgina!' said the Admiral, who was something of a coward, putting down his helm and going away on another tack. 'You know very well why I am speaking of these things to 'you! But to return to that other question, I'm not sure'—he hesitated—'you see, Eileen takes her views from me—

she's not in the least tainted with Nationalism'—he cleared his throat—' and it's a goodish time since I first spoke of that idea to you—some time after poor Henry's death, wasn't it ? '

' Yes. After Dan had come in for the property ! ' said Mrs. Palliser, with a voice like frozen iron. ' What were you saying about Eileen's views ? '

' Oh, nothing very much,' equivocated the Admiral, ' only various little things made me think she mightn't be so ready now——'

' That is perhaps as well for her,' cut in Mrs. Palliser ; ' as a matter of fact, *I* had come over to warn *you* that Dan was not particularly ready either ! '

It was gallantly said, and the bluster of the Biggest little Pirate in the China Seas died before the unflinching front presented by Dan's mother.

Little Lizzie, who bit and bullied her son, and fought to the death any assailant from without, could have sympathized with Mrs. Palliser. She had received a blow. Worst of all, when the Admiral had delivered his assault, her indomitable conscience had taken the field at his side. She had denied and countered his accusations, but he had only confirmed her fears. And what could she do or say ? Her distress must be dumb. She knew herself too well to think that she could gently admonish, advise, or entreat. Had such a course been suggested to her she would have said, " Faithful are the wounds of a friend ! " He shall have the truth from me ! '

It is not only lovers who are not always able to tell their love, and have, pent in their bosoms, quenchless and undying flames. There are some mothers also in whom a flame burns that nothing can quench, but they have so walled it in with conscientious

severities that those who might have turned to it for warmth and consoling see only blackness, and so look elsewhere. And though both mother and child suffer, it is the mother's heart that, like the burning bush, burns on and cannot be consumed.

When the Admiral asserted that his nephew spent all his time at Monalour House, he did not expect himself to be taken literally, which was, indeed, an accident that rarely occurred to him ; but since he and Eileen had each, on separate visits of inquiry, met with Dan on the same errand, he was not without a certain justification.

Dan was getting in his harvest late, and with difficulty ; late, because a wet and chilly summer had kept back all the crops, and with difficulty, because the oats having been left standing, in the hope that such heads as they had achieved might improve, a storm of wind and rain had fallen upon them and nearly half his fifteen acre field had been 'laid,' and, defying the efforts of the reaper and binder, had had to be cut by hand. Politics and 'stunts' of all kinds were set aside in the rush of harvest work. Everything was behindhand, and Dan slaved on the land, like any of his labourers, working with his hands the long day through, enjoying the physical fatigue that made him sleep at night, and helped him to overpower thought by day.

A spell of fine weather had at last been granted, and there had come a week of those rich days of mid-August when the earth seems to have deepened in colour ; the grass is a more fervent green, the corn a hotter gold, and the deep blue of the sky is deepened by contrast with the great boulders of white cloud that sit round the horizon, looking solid as masses of

quartz, hardly moving from early morning till the sun goes west and their whiteness is turned to butter colour.

It was past five o'clock, and Dan was in the oat field, gathering the bound sheaves and loading a cart with them. His coat and waistcoat were off, an old khaki felt hat was on the back of his head, his grey frieze knee-breeches were stained many shades of green and brown. He loved the work ; he took pride in the skill he could bring to the farm labour. He knew he could beat any of his men at their own job, and why not ? he said to himself, it was his as much as theirs, he was as good a farm-hand, and as good an Irishman too, as any of them, better maybe ! His men watched him, and wondered, and while they respected, did not approve ; they kept out of his way as far as might be, finding, as they said, that the man who'd be working foot to foot with Mr. Dan would be clear dead before the day was out, and saying to each other that it was unknown what satisfaction a gentleman would get out of working himself hard enough to kill a bull. But as none of them had ever been hunted by a swarm of thronging thoughts, as by wasps, they were not qualified to judge.

Car Ducarrig, wearing a white flannel coat and skirt, a shady straw hat, and tennis shoes, was riding Gambler, her companion in misfortune, at a walk about the fields of the demesne farm of Monalour, taking the air, and giving the horse exercise, with the least possible exertion to him or to herself. From the smooth grass of the Big Lawn she diverged into the stubbly oat field, attracted by the sound of the machine. Then she saw Dan, a tall and splendid figure, tossing the yellow sheaves up to the man who was standing

in the high-piled cart. She fell to observing him as he worked. ‘He *is* good to look at !’ she thought, noting how his absolute mastery of his work gave grace to strength. Her sense of beauty lost no detail of the group. Colour, line, and movement, all were there. The field, slanting a little to the west, had for background the dark green mass of the trees of Monalour ; the dotted lines of stooks, the heavy-laden cart, the big grey horse, the lad standing on the piled-up sheaves high against the blue sky, were lit by the low sun ; the shadows, long and purple, intensified the gilded yellow of the corn ; another high-laden cart moved slowly across the middle distance. ‘It’s a perfect classic of harvest,’ Car thought. ‘Nothing could be better composed ! And Sir Daniel’—she was accustomed to think of him half mockingly, she liked to assure herself of her cool dispassionateness—‘Sir Daniel ought to be done in marble for a Colonial Institute—with a kangaroo or a wombat—whatever a wombat is !’ She found herself amused by the thought of the wombat ; her mind moved on and dwelt, with the special, rather effete pleasure that simplicity gave her, on Sir Daniel’s mystification were she to try and expound to him his association with a wombat.

Dan had not seen her. He was working with his back to her, and the recurring roar and rattle of the machine silenced sound. The cart he was filling had received its load, it lumbered slowly away to the stack-yard. He threw the old khaki caubeen on the stubble, and drove his pitchfork into the ground, and wiped his forehead with his big, hairy forearm.

‘A typical Son of Toil and the Soil !’ mocked Car. ‘No earthly relation of Mrs. Palliser’s ! She’s been quite misinformed about it !’ She touched Gambler

with the mild heel of her tennis shoe, and came near to Dan, who was lighting a cigarette.

'I shall report you to Tom McLoughlen for slackening!' she said, taking him unawares. 'I never saw such idleness!'

Dan took the hand she held out to him. The shock of joy at her presence, so forbidden, so longed-for, made him incapable of speech for a moment.

'Thank you so much for coming to ask after me,' Car went on. 'I was nothing the worse, only my ankle a little bit stiff—that's why I'm riding, and now'—she rushed on with what she had to say—'don't interrupt me! Before we go any further, I just wish to say that I *forbid* you to bore me with explanations about that affair of the bank at the Show! I know all about it. That old Coyne talked to Arnold and me until I nearly went mad. And I may say that I *hate* your sending me Tara's Cup, but if it gives you any subtle satisfaction to do so, I will yield that point.' She looked at him, laughing. 'Oh, I can see you're dying to inflict the whole story on me all over again, but I won't have it!'

The multiplicity of Dan's emotions, all tumultuous, and not one of them such as he could easily give expression to, silenced him more effectually than any prohibition. Car watched his face with a connoisseur's enjoyment of the various *nuances* of misery that passed over it. This was the simplicity that enchanted her.

'So sorry to disappoint you, Sir Daniel, but I can't let you persuade me you wanted to bring me and Gambler down!' she said, chaffing him.

'At all events, I've sacked Heskin!' he said at last.

'Then I shall make it a personal matter,' said Car

intrepidly, ‘you either forgive him, or I shall not forgive you !’

It was an unequal contest. Dan broke down, and surrendered every point unconditionally. He said to himself that he couldn’t argue with her, because it was such ages since he had seen her. Something was choking him, holding his breath from him, murmuring in his breast, over and over again, monotonously as a tolling bell, shatteringly as a minute gun, one foolish word, a word whose value was for him unsullied. ‘Darling ! Darling !’ thought poor Sir Daniel, helplessly ; and did not know that though his lips kept silence his eyes betrayed him.

‘ You know, *you* look as if you had been overdoing it !’ said Car. ‘ Haven’t you worked your eight hours or whatever it is ? Come back with me and I’ll give you some tea, and we might have a little music if you like. Arnold’s out.’

She couldn’t do otherwise, she thought, the poor thing looked so tired. That presentiment of trouble that she had had at the Show had been all nonsense. It was nearly a week ago, and he had not been near her—only just asked at the door how she was—that didn’t look as if things were very serious. She *would* ask him to tea if she wanted to. It was all very well to be prudent, but that was no reason why she should be inhuman.

CHAPTER XXIII

EILEEN CAULFIELD was beginning to wonder whither her success, her indisputable success, with Lord Ducarrig was going to lead. She had begun by accepting his attentions with gratification, even with elation, and without any definite consideration as to their drift. He was a novelty, he was distinguished, he was rich. He was old enough for her to sail with him under the flag of friendship, and yet not so old as to deprive the friendship of the spice of adventure. Moreover, since the Admiral had 'put down' his motor during the war, and had not as yet put up another, it was agreeable to have the Monalour cars practically at call.

But, since Eileen was gifted with more than her share of that sense which is called common, and is very much the reverse, it seemed to her that the possible disadvantages of her success might outweigh its advantages. 'After all——' she said to herself, and although she left the sentence unfinished, its implication was clear in her mind. The 'runs' with Ducarrig in the little two-seater car, that had become so familiar a feature of the mauve gravel sweep in front of the Fairhaven hall-door, had generally ended at Monalour House in the croquet or lawn-tennis that had been their ostensible object, and at Monalour she found that Dan had become as frequent a visitor as she, while Lord Ducarrig appeared to be almost as ready to extend his friendship to her cousin as to herself. Eileen

was changing her mind about Dan. Her father's overtures to Mrs. Palliser, and their reception, had not been concealed from her by her mother, and the daughter of the biggest little pirate in the China Seas had no intention of wasting powder and shot on an enterprise that would not result in spoils. Perhaps she had hoped for other consequences from the growing warmth of her friendship with Lord Ducarrig ; the other and older friendship might revive in response to a stimulant of an efficacy so recognised and respected. But the spur had failed, the stimulant, well-tried and recognised though it was, had been of no avail, and the blue eyes of the pirate's daughter had recognised, with inherited perception, that Dan was a sacked town. She had not even the satisfaction of feeling that she had in any degree afflicted or injured that rival pirate, Lord Ducarrig's lawful owner ; it was but too apparent to Eileen that, far from being regarded as a disturber of traffic by Lady Ducarrig, she was being encouraged as a benefactor. There emerged, however, from the situation, two pleasing features : that she was credited by the neighbourhood, and notably Miss de Vere, with the subjugation of Lord Ducarrig ; and that she had clearly indicated her complete indifference to Dan.

Yet even these achievements left something still to be desired, and Eileen debated with herself vainly as to how a state of affairs so complicated and so unparalleled in her experience was going to arrange itself. She only knew that she was beginning to dread the soft, gliding, grind of the tyres of the two-seater on the Fairhaven gravel. The sound had, she thought, something inexorable and pitiless in it, like what it would feel to be pursued by an elephant. The pleasing

note of the horn, so far from emulating John Peel's, was beginning to have a precisely opposite effect, and would send her flying to ground in her own room, until summoned by her mother, or the Admiral, to fulfil her duties as the Girl-at-home, to pour out the tea, and to make herself agreeable to the visitor. The visitor's behaviour was all that it should be. He listened to Mrs. Caulfield's platitudes, whose sole social claim to attention consisted in their ill-nature, and showed remarkable address in responding to them without making either himself or his hostess ridiculous, which, in the process of exchanging ideas with Mrs. Caulfield, was not always as simple as it might seem. He indulged in reminiscences of tropic climes with the Admiral, and succeeded better than he in keeping the temperature of the stories something below that of the places with which they dealt. And always, below and beyond these amenities, Eileen was aware of an unremitting observation of herself, and of allusions that would recall to her, and her only, some incident, or conversation, in which she had been involved. The visits had generally ended with a run for her, or for the Admiral, in the two-seater. Eileen understood perfectly why her father, sometimes her mother, was invited to take what Lord Ducarrig was accustomed to speak of as her place in the motor.

'Diplomacy has its laws,' he had said to her, in the seclusion of the two-seater, 'and the Eleventh Commandment is to honour the father and mother of your friends! I suppose I may consider myself to be a friend by this time?'

One afternoon, not long after Mrs. Palliser's visit to Fairhaven, Ducarrig had taken Eileen for what he had called a stroll round the lake. The little car, that

was the latest expression of comfort and luxury, slid noiselessly along the smooth bog road and the wind of its going was pleasant. The lake was of a blue as intense as the sky ; a haze of heat had turned the distant hills to silver. At a place where, by a group of willows, the road stooped to the lake's level, and cart-ruts and hoof-marks told of thirsty horses, Ducarrig stopped the car. A light northerly breeze was blowing the lily leaves out of the water ; they looked like black half-moons against its ruffled blue and silver. A string of wild duck broke from the reeds and steadied into low strong flight towards the willow-grown islands lower down the lake. The car had stopped opposite to Monalour demesne, and the grey old house was just visible between the heavy green screens of trees. Some cattle were standing out in the lake, more stood on the gravel shore by the boat-quay. The Lake House, away to the right, had caught the sun in its windows and they were flashing like electric lights ; farther still to the right, the Admiral's snowy boat-house set its standard of propriety to the neighbourhood. Behind all were the silver ghosts of the hills, wanly beautiful, with the paler northern sky behind them. A few gulls from the distant sea were floating on the lake, and a lengthy, lazy heron rose with an effort from the rushes near the road, and flapped slowly away with creaking wings.

' His works want oiling, eh ? He makes more noise than the car ! ' said Ducarrig. ' Charming view this ! Full of all the poetry and sentiment of Ireland ! It is quite one of my favourite spots. We might enjoy it for a moment or two. We have no need to hurry.' He let his left hand drop from the steering-wheel. It fell on Eileen's which was in her lap, and remained

there. A vivid pink rose in Eileen's cheeks, after an instant of hesitation she gently drew her hand away.

'Ah, why?' murmured Ducarrig, almost inaudibly. He sighed. He had cultivated an eighteenth-century manner with young women, considering that it suited his type. 'This it is to grow old! To be—hateful word!—elderly! Why be unkind?' He sighed again, and again his hand found Eileen's. Since I cannot have the privileges of youth, why do you refuse me those of old age?' He leaned close to her and pressed her hand, and told himself that he had turned the sentence very neatly.

'Oh, please, Lord Ducarrig,' Eileen said nervously, 'won't you—isn't it getting late? Don't you think we had better——' She removed herself from him as far as the narrow limits of the car permitted.

Ducarrig released her hand with a lingering pressure. 'I bow to your decree!' he said impressively, '"*la belle dame sans merci!*" This is the tragedy of age, to have a heart of five-and-twenty in a body of fifty!'

Eileen's practical mind flew, in spite of her perturbation, to that page of the peerage whereon was set down, plain for all men to see, the regrettable fact that Arnold, Lord Ducarrig, was on the shady side of five and fifty, but she said, with a nervous laugh, 'You see, Lord Ducarrig, it's just the opposite with me! and my fifty-years-old good sense assures me that it is time for us to go on round the lake if I'm not to be late for dinner, and you don't know what a scrape I shall get into if——'

'Enough, enough!' said Ducarrig, with melancholy chivalry, 'you have only to utter your command.'

With another sigh he started the car. ‘ Well, let us choose a more cheerful topic ! Let’s talk about my love for—no, don’t look frightened !—my love for this country ! Scenery, climate, society, all perfect ! Not even Sinn Fein can poison it for me ! What shall I do when I have to give up Monalour ? Is there the least chance that your cousin would sell ? I should make very little difficulty about the price, I can assure you, if there were a hope of its coming into the market ! ’

‘ It seems rather unlikely, I think,’ said Eileen, doubtfully. ‘ I know father is always saying that Dan won’t be able to afford to live there unless—unless he marries money.’

A fainter replica of the pink flush showed itself for a moment, and Ducarrig’s heart, in spite of the peerage, was young enough to feel a stab of jealousy.

‘ And a very sensible thing to do ! ’ he said blandly, ‘ marrying for love is the most foolish game in the world, and those that have played it will be the first to tell you so. Though there may be a few exceptions.’

‘ The present company are always exceptions, aren’t they ? ’ said Eileen, with a sideways flash of her long eyes. She felt safe now that the car was going ; she was confident that whatever she might say to the man at the wheel, he would not run any risk for the sake of sentiment.

‘ I think you know as well as I do that that isn’t fair,’ said Ducarrig, in a voice that combined reproachful tenderness with the fortitude of a warrior who makes light of his wounds, ‘ you may withhold your sympathy from a poor devil who has made a mess of his life, but you might draw the line at laughing at him ! And I’m going away to-morrow, for three weeks at

least, so that even if you repent, you won't have a chance of saying you're sorry, and you'll have forgotten all about it by the time I come home ! '

' But I wasn't laughing, really ! ' said Eileen. ' I shouldn't dare to laugh at anyone as grand as you ! ' She risked another glance, laughing as she spoke, and met his eye.

' I'm afraid you're a naughty little girl ! ' said Ducarrig, with a fatherly smile, ' incorrigibly naughty ! Let's talk of some one more interesting than I am. Dan, for instance ! Cousin Dan ! What about him ? We haven't seen him at Monalour for an age. Car is inconsolable. She has no one to sing to ! I'm a Philistine, of course, quite unworthy of such a privilege. And, between ourselves, that doesn't altogether break my heart ! Though there *are* songs I'm very fond of. There was one I used to sing myself, when I was young and when it didn't fit my case in the least ! Let me see, how did it go ? Ah yes, it comes back to me now, rather too vividly, alas ! '

*' Had I met thee in thy beauty, when my heart and hand
were free,*

*Ere another claimed the duty, which my ha-ha-heart
must yield to thee ! '*

He sang the words with much satisfaction, slightly out of tune. ' Ah, I used to warble that very feelingly, I assure you, little as I thought it might ever come true ! ' He looked sideways at Eileen. ' After all, there's always a sporting chance, isn't there ? What is known as the *tertium quid* may come into play ! but *you* know nothing about that—! Let's come back to Cousin Dan. *He* likes the right kind of music ; Car will sing to *him* by the hour ! *He* knows all about

it ! But perhaps he's a humbug ! What do you think ? ' He was watching Eileen while he spoke.

' Dan's devoted to music,' said Eileen primly ; ' he adores Lady Ducarrig's singing.'

' Ah—her singing,' said Ducarrig in a level voice, turning the car out of the bog road into the high road that followed the Monalour demesne wall and would bring them back to Fairhaven.

CHAPTER XXIV

CAR DUCARRIG's resolution not to permit humanity to be mastered by prudence had held, unshaken by indications that the counsels of prudence might, after all, have been identical with those of humanity. The harvest, that year, after the passing of one resplendent week, was being brought in slowly, and with difficulty. Mornings, that promised respite from rain, snatched at ; afternoons, that had begun cheerfully, dissolving into inconsolable tears, of remorse, perhaps, for the broken promise of the morning. It seemed to Car that whenever she looked out of her sitting-room windows, that gave her a view of the oak-shaded back-avenue, she saw Dan Palliser striding along it in shining oil-skins, with Lizzie at his heel, or driving one of his own carts, piled high with straw. She said to herself that he lived up to his doctrines, and she liked him for doing so.

It was, she told herself, only natural that in these times of stress he should turn in to what was, after all, his own house, for a cup of tea, instead of going all that endless way home across the Big Lawn to the Lake House, with that severe old Mamma to give it to him. Car said to Prudence that she defied it and all its warnings, and having declared her independence, she bestowed upon her landlord a standing invitation to come in at any moment that suited him, ' for any meal, from breakfast, down to a glass of hot water at bed-time.' Arnold was in the north, shooting, and the

people who had been coming to stay with her had failed her at the last moment.

' Afraid of coming to Ireland ! Her own sister one of them ! Cowardly hounds ! ' And now that the trains were stopped—it was too troublesome to go away, and too difficult too. She didn't much care, she said. She had the dogs ; and she was not the least afraid of raiders or anything else. She rather liked being alone ; yes, really, but he could see, couldn't he, that it really was a kindness to come in and have a cup of tea, and tell her what was happening in the great world of Eskragh, and give her someone to practise for—she got so lazy about singing if she hadn't an audience now and then.

' Turn in, my lord ! Turn in ! ' said Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, with the perfidy of the East in her heart, and Sisera had accepted the invitation, and the visit had ended badly.

Car, the wife of Arnold Ducarrig, had nothing but good will in her heart for this tall Sisera, whose need for shelter and comradeship appealed to her. Nevertheless, it might have been better for him, also, if the door of the tent had been closed.

But that is a matter of opinion. Dan, at all events, assured himself that now that he had squarely faced the position, and knew exactly how he stood, there was no object in keeping away. ' Nothing will make it better for me, and it can't be worse. It's nothing to her, anyway.' Dan turned in to the tent.

Errors of judgment are often made by those whose consciences are of a water-clear innocence. Yet unfair though it may seem (and perhaps, is), such errors are no more ignored by the avenging deities than are those that have been committed defiantly and

in full hearing of the advance of those felt-shod feet. Possibly the authority whose affair was to attend to the errors of Car Ducarrig had a sense of humour ; it cannot be denied that the aptness of the retribution appears to argue a resolve to make the punishment fit the crime, accompanied by a mental gesture that might be rendered, outwardly, with a wink, and a shadowy finger laid lengthwise on a metaphorical nose.

August was over, and the glories of the autumn flowers were at their height. The gardens at Monalour shouted aloud with colour. Nothing short of a brass band could express their stridency. The glaring outcry of the tall scarlet lobelias, the barbaric splendour of the dahlias, with their shrieks of orange and flame, magenta and canary ; the murmuring harmonies of the phloxes, in softly-mingled pinks and mauves and whites, with a red or a purple here and there among them, to give an accent, and to save them from the reproach of too sentimental a sweetness of tone. In one of his Eastern satrapies Lord Ducarrig had bought wisely and well of those bronze flower-vases of China and Japan, that are, of all objects in which art and utility are combined, the most perfect and satisfying. The temperaments of the flower-gardener and the flower-arranger are seldom united, and it is sufficiently apparent why this should be so. The gardener, with his caution, his instinct for preservation, his inveterate stinginess, is inevitably incapable of the free and buccaneering sacrifice of the fittest that marks the true flower-arranger.

Car Ducarrig was a buccaneer with an eye for colour and a gift for decoration. Under her rule the stiff old drawing-room of Monalour took on a new aspect. Its gaunt individuality was effaced, subdued into

becoming no more than a drab background for the imperious beauty of achievements of form and colour, such as it had never before dreamed of. Nothing short of fire could obliterate the heavy foot-prints of Mrs. Palliser, but Car's flowers, in the Eastern bronze vases, could, at least, cause the beholder to forget them.

Dan Palliser, hungering for beauty, starved of it at home, finding no sense of it abroad among the men to whose service he was devoting his enthusiasms, came in through this open tent door, after days of hard work in his harvest fields, or of discouragement, daily deepening, among his back-sliding converts, and, lying back in his father's big chair, let his thirsty eyes and ears drink beauty, wandering from the flowers to their buccaneer arranger, seated at the piano singing. It was an added enchantment for him that she sang for her own pleasure no less than for his. She would breathe a song into the twilight, perfect as a star, and while he was realising that it was essential to his peace that he should hear it again, and instantly, she would break into it once more, helplessly, as if his need of it was hers also. And meanwhile the avenging deity to whom had been committed the correction of Car's errors (who must, certainly, have been heavily shod with felt, so unaware was she of his nearness), was coming nearer every day, bearing in his hand a dart that he must have borrowed from quite another deity, waiting for the moment when he should cause her to suffer for that sacrifice of prudence to humanity.

It was lonely enough for Car in the big house. People came to lunch and to tea and to play lawn-tennis, but 'these bad times'—that was the formula every one used—they went home early. 'It isn't

quite safe, you know—I promised we should be home by— by, in short, a time that would have left Car a couple of grey hours of solitude, had not her sense of humanity suggested that offer to her landlord of such hospitality as might help him to bear his burden of toil. That it might at the same time mitigate her own loneliness had been an afterthought, and had seemed to her the reward of well-doing.

She told herself serenely that she liked Dan, quite definitely and decidedly. One felt absolutely sure of him ; he was such a Sahib ; and it was delightful to sing to him ; one knew he treasured every note, and he knew the good from the less-good as well as she did. And he was very good-looking, and it was entirely to his credit that he irritated Arnold. Yet Arnold, contrary to his custom in such cases, concealed his irritation ; it was only discernible by her, who had, as she said to herself, the misfortune of knowing him well. Arnold's attitude was, on the whole, rather obscure. Perhaps he considered that Dan served as a screen for his flirtation with Dan's cousin. There was nothing obscure about the flirtation, Car thought disdainfully ; it was even possible that—at last—Arnold was hit a little harder than he liked. An old story recurred to her, a story that treated of an unsuccessful marriage. ‘ Years rolled on,’ said the widow, ‘ and th’ obstacle was removed ! ’ Was that Arnold’s game ? Was he being civil to Dan in the hope that he might ‘ remove th’ obstacle ’ ? Her head went up, and her colour rose. That would be for her to decide ! She was not going to be manœuvred one inch out of whatever path she might choose for herself !

In the meantime, thank goodness ! Arnold was away, had been away for a fortnight, and another week

of blessed grass-widowhood was still hers. Though, she reflected, it was impossible to feel that Arnold's absence had in any way the effect of widowing her. It was impossible to regard him as her husband. He was an unpleasant man who occupied the house that she was condemned to live in, and sat opposite to her at meals. (Breakfast, never ; lunch, seldom.) Sometimes she had felt a little sorry for him, especially during their official life, when the sepulchre had to be kept so carefully whitewashed, and the resident ravening wolf—that was herself—was never allowed to show its nose—(its snout, she corrected herself, well powdered)—except at dinner parties. She wondered if her father, now dead, and her mother, re-married, had ever realised what they had let her in for ! Something under six months of what might, by a straining of definitions, be called affection, then Purgatory. Well, she was having a moment of respite now—some one must have said a mass for her.

'Dan, do you mind shutting the window behind me ? It's quite cold this evening.' Car was sitting at the piano ; Dan got out of his father's chair by the fire, and shut the long window, and came over and leaned on the end of the piano. He hated feeling that he was towering over her, and when he came down to the level of the desk, he could look straight into her eyes, because she never put the desk up—that was one of the splendours of her music ; she needed no book, it welled up in heavenly streams straight from her heart. . . .

He was thinking that the last of the corn had been carried that afternoon, and there would be in future no special reason why he should come in every evening, as he had been doing, for—how long ?

He couldn't think. Time doesn't exist in Heaven. Long or short, it was coming to an end.

'We carried the last of the corn to-day,' he said abruptly. 'It's all safe now.' His voice was full of depression, and his eyes were tragic.

Car began to laugh. She stood up and shut the piano. 'What a disaster! Come and sit by the fire and tell me about it, and I'll condole with you—though I can't imagine why I should!'

It was six o'clock on a dark and rainy September afternoon, and the fire of turf and wood made a comfortable point of light and warmth. Dan sat on the fender-stool and looked up at her. How delightful of her to laugh at him—that low, delicious laugh—

'Well?' said Car, with another laugh. 'If it's all safe, why do you look so heart-broken?'

'I believe you know,' Dan muttered; 'if you thought about it you would!'

'I wish you to tell me,' said Car idly, despotically.

Dan thought, 'I must be careful! I must be careful! If once I began I mightn't know where to stop!' He got up restlessly. 'Well, you see—I suppose—you've been awfully kind letting me come in every day like this, Lady Ducarrig,—but—'

'I thought I told you to call me Car?'

(It was as though she had plunged that white hand, with the rings that were glittering in the firelight, into his breast and caught his heart. It wasn't fair—Oh God, did she know what she was doing to him?)

But here, before he had collected his ideas, the door opened, and Hammond came in.

'Miss de Vere is at the door, m'lady, and asks if it is too late for you to see her?'

'Not in the least; ask her to come in, Hammond.'

She turned to Dan. ‘Don’t go! Stay and help me—oh, and lest I forget later on—I can’t ride with you to-morrow,—people coming—but I will the next day, and I can sympathize with you then about the unfortunate saving of the harvest! There’s no time now.’

This was indisputable, as Katie de Vere was already sailing up the long room, and had even entered upon the monologue which was the form her conversation was wont to take.

‘I was passing the gates, and I thought I would chance your letting me in. An outrageous hour to call, I know! I’m quite relieved to find I’m not your only visitor!’ Some shade of expression in Katie de Vere’s very intelligent, very plain face, as she turned to Dan, annoyed Car.

‘Oh, he doesn’t count as a visitor. He’s only the landlord! He comes regularly every day to see I’m not making away with his property—he doesn’t trust me a yard! Do you, Dan?’ she said coolly.

‘It’s a novelty in Ireland to find landlord and tenant on such good terms!’ responded Miss de Vere, her green eyes expressing a desire to be more facetious than her discretion permitted. ‘I congratulate you, Dan, on your luck! I’ve just been having tea with your mother. She tells me she never sees you now, what with your farm, and your various rebel enterprises!’

‘I’ve been pretty hard at work, but I don’t know what you mean by “rebel enterprises,”’ Dan answered sulkily.

‘You know half the country says you’re a Sinn Feiner, and the other half thinks you played Judas to that firebrand, Eugene Cashen, and delivered him

over to the police !' continued Katie, ignoring Dan's interpolation. ' I hear it was being talked of at the chapel on Sunday.'

' That's a very old story now. It's a month since he was arrested,' Dan growled, regarding his kinswoman with disfavour. He resented Katie's ruthless cross-examinations. What was it to her what might have been said about him at the chapel, or anywhere else ? ' As a matter of fact, it was Father Hugh Macnamara, who asked me to meet him at Cashen's, to talk over different things, and it happened we were both there when the police came.' His temper was rising, and his nerves were strained. ' I'm getting pretty sick of lies and misrepresentations !' he ended violently.

' My dear boy, don't imagine that *I* believe *any* thing I hear ! Least of all such obvious absurdity as that ! I'm far too wily a bird to be caught with chaff of that kind. But you know, most people will believe anything !' said Katie cheerfully. ' And, by the by, I met your friend, Father Macnamara, as I was coming here. He asked me where you were. He had been to the Lake House to try and see you. I suggested to him to try here—in the farm-yard, I mean, of course !' she added, with a swift glance from one to the other of her audience. ' I spoke to him for a minute or two. He says these new police, that they've sent over from England, are burning houses right and left, and that your friend Eugene's will be the next ! It seems a funny way of settling the country, doesn't it ? But one hears the wildest stories ! I simply ignore them. All *I* say is "*Laissez-moi planter mes pois,*" and don't bother me with politics or gossip ! You'll get no thanks from these people, Dan,' she went on. ' It's always been the same way, from Emmett down to

Parnell. They lick your boots to begin with, but as soon as they think things are not going as they like, overboard goes Jonah !'

'Jonah's going overboard on his own this time !' said Dan, letting loose some of the exasperation that the super-intelligence in Katie's green eyes had kindled in him. 'I've no doubt but that all you people will be delighted ! There's a meeting of the Farmers' Society to-morrow, and I'm going to chuck—they've beaten me. That lie you heard about Cashen is all part of the same thing—they've let me down over everything ! But I'm not going to wait till I'm kicked out. I'm going out on my own !' His eyes, full of anger, met Katie de Vere's, challenging her to exult over him.

'I'm not a bit delighted, Dan,' said Katie de Vere soberly, 'only sorry for another honest man that's fallen among thieves ! There it is, you see, Lady Ducarrig,' she went on, turning to Car, 'that's the hopelessness of Ireland ! It's always the reverse of the old proverb ! The honest men fall out, and the rogues come by their own—that is, the honest men's own ! No, Dan, my dear boy, take example by your Uncle Dick and me, and stick to your farm and your garden ! Not that I hold with Dick's gilt-edged gardening, with his apron and his white kid gloves ! I always say that no one has a right to call himself a gardener unless he's prepared—when he's pricking out seedlings, for example—to hold a slug in his mouth until he has a spare moment when he can squash it !'

Response to this stalwart confession of faith was spared to either of Miss de Vere's hearers by the re-entrance of Hammond, this time bearing a telegram.

'May I ?' asked Car, and opened it. 'No answer,

Hammond.' She turned to her guests: ' It's from Arnold. He says, " Arriving Thursday afternoon with three guns ask Palliser to dine to meet them ! " I didn't expect him for a week. I suppose he wants to shoot the mountain, and wants you to tell him how to do it, Dan. Some one told me there were a lot of grouse on it.'

' With all due respect to Lord Ducarrig, I call that a very rash telegram,' said Katie de Vere, shaking her head. ' Does he imagine that it won't be all over the country that he's bringing three guns here ? Even if Dan's Sinn Fein friends don't know that " guns " mean men, they'll know well enough that in this case men mean guns ! '

' How do they think they can shoot ? ' said Dan, his voice still sullen with anger. ' The police will stop them if no one else does. Though there are no police here to do it now—not nearer than Eskragh, anyhow. And they say the mountain's full of chaps on the run ! '

' Thursday afternoon,' repeated Car. ' That's the day after to-morrow, isn't it ? You will come and dine, Dan, won't you, and tell them about it ? ' She was looking absently at Miss de Vere as she spoke, and her eyes moved onward to Dan. He was standing erect, his hands in his pockets, staring across the dusky room out of the window. In the fading light his face looked haggard and unhappy.

CHAPTER XXV

FATHER HUGH MACNAMARA found it difficult to decide if he were relieved or disappointed at having failed to find Dan Palliser at the Lake House. He had things to say to him that he felt he could not write, even if he would ; advice to offer of a sort that he might convey by look and tone of voice, but that require a medium more supple and evasive than pen and ink.

‘ I must warn him ! ’ he thought. ‘ But God knows ’twill be a hard job ! He may tell me it’s no business of mine—indeed maybe it isn’t either—I wonder was it for a sign to me that I couldn’t see him just now ? ’

Father Hugh’s cob slackened, unnoticed by her driver, into a walk, at a level piece of the road which offered, as she was well aware, no justification for such a liberty on her part, but the priest was too deeply engaged in planning the course of an interview with Dan to be aware of her manœuvres. ‘ The dear fellow ! ’ he was thinking, with a glow of affection for the man who had disregarded the barriers of class and creed, and had recognised a kindred and lonely spirit, and offered himself to be a friend. ‘ He’s no match for those that are against him ! Let him be vexed with me ! He’ll know I’m only acting out of regard for him. “ Though he slay me yet will I trust in him ! ” He knows as well as I do that “ Faithful are the wounds of a friend ! ” ’ A quotation whose employment by both Mrs. Palliser and Father Hugh,

in the same connection, would seem to be a confirmation of the theory that extremes meet.

The priest's way back to Eskragh took him past Jimmy Ryan's farm, which lay beyond Monalour at the end of the lake. He had but just passed its gate when he met its owner, riding home.

'Turn back now, Father, with me,' said Jimmy hospitably, 'and Herself will give you a cup o' tea. You have a good bit between you and home yet !'

'Tis a tempting offer, I believe I shouldn't listen to you, Mr. Ryan,' said the priest hesitating, finally yielding. 'I'm ashamed to think what hour of the night it'll be before I'm home !'

'Ah, what matter ? There's a light moon ! Sure I'll give the pony a handful of oats and she'll go home all the quicker for the rest !'

The hospitality of such as Mrs. Ryan is no idle affair, 'no laughing-joke at all,' as she would herself have said. The soda-bread, and the fresh butter, the eggs and the honey, the cream and the strong tea were not there to be looked at only.

'Indeed 'n if I'd known his Reverence 'd be in it, I'd have had things some way decenter—if it was only a seed cake, or a nice pork chop—sure we're just after killing a pig'—Mrs. Ryan reproached Jimmy and herself.

But Father Hugh, a martyr to indigestion, thanked heaven secretly that his invitation had been an impromptu one, and shocked his entertainers by his calls upon the kettle.

There has not often been a time in Ireland when what is ambiguously spoken of as Unrest has not been an integral feature of the country's life, a skeleton in the cupboard, whose bones give an occasional

disquieting rattle, whose moods are as incalculable as those of the weather. But in the year 1920 the skeleton had come forth, bribed, cajoled, flattered, persuaded of his wrongs. Slowly, at first, he had declared himself, but by the early autumn there were not many houses where he was not sitting, master of the feast, calling the tune, and making others pay for it.

‘ God knows what the end of all will be, and worse it’s getting every day in the place of better ! ’ said Jimmy Ryan, as he lit a pipe after supper, and prepared to enjoy a large and general denunciation of all things and most people. ‘ I’ll say the prices are good always, but look at what we has to pay for labour ! It’s well for me I’ve got five good lads and three gerr’ls coming on, and won’t be trusting to these blackguard labourers always ! There’s little Johnny able to tackle up a horse and cart as good as meself this minute, and Hannah and Julia that can milk three cows apiece, thanks be to God !— ’ The eulogium was interrupted by the furtive entry of an assortment of the offspring that were its subject. ‘ G’wout o’ that ! ’ roared the proud father, with an ebullition of fury shattering in its suddenness. ‘ G’wout I tell ye ! What satisfaction have I of meself with the like o’ ye hanging out o’ me mouth this way all day long ! ’

The assortment vanished, as drops of water evaporate on red-hot iron. Mrs. Ryan followed swiftly.

‘ I have them well regulated,’ said Jimmy complacently. ‘ They’re good children, all, only the youngest little fellow. He follies the mother’s family —them Lyonses was always very mawkish about the face—well, no matter ! Light your pipe, Father—what’s this I was saying when them youngsters came annoying us ? ’

' I don't smoke, thank you, Mr. Ryan. I want to say a word to you, I'm thankful for this chance,' said the priest quickly. ' I know you're a friend of Mr. Dan Palliser's; maybe you didn't hear all the nasty talk that's going about him in Eskragh? Nicholas Coyne that's going about saying to all he meets that Mr. Palliser had no right to the prize for jumping he got at the show; and that it was against the rules his sending his horse in to practise over the bank. I heard he was going to call a commytee meeting to inquire into it. He says Lady Ducarrig's horse should have had it. I don't understand these technical matters——'

Father Hugh was interrupted by a bellow of rage from his host.

' What hell's tricks—I ask your pardon, Father—what in the name-o'-goodness tricks is that old schemer after now? The dirty, low, raving old scamp! Why, wasn't it himself gave me the key o' the ground when I asked it from him!' shouted Jimmy, with a fine disregard of the general ethic of the case, and recognising only the necessity of exonerating Dan of complicity. ' Sure 'twas Bill Heskin and me done the whole thing! Bill's after getting the sack on the head of it from Mr. Dan. Tearing mad Mr. Dan was! He ate the face off meself too. Sure he told me he'd sent the Cup to Lady Ducarrig, and himself has a meeting of the commytee called, and he says right or wrong he'll resign! I hope in God he'll not! I told him there wasn't a year that horses didn't get schooled over that bank, and what harm too?' ended Jimmy, who was a man of liberal views.

' Well, Mr. Ryan, I can assure you that Nicholas Coyne has it given out that he couldn't refuse the key

to the President when he sent his man for it. There was no talk at all of you. I was trying to see Mr. Palliser to-day to get the truth——'

'By the holy smoke, doesn't the Baby beat the bees in the making o' wax !' Jimmy said, with indignation that was not untinged with respect. ' Didn't I tell Mr. Dan there'd be trouble yet out of his Co-operative Stores ! That's where he's treading on the Baby's toes, and that's what no man done yet without he was sorry for it after ! He knows well once Mr. Dan has that started it'll cut the ground from under his profiteering prices ! And a good job too ! But the Baby'll make it hot for them that does it, no fear but he will ! '

'There are other stories going too, Mr. Ryan,' Father Hugh began again anxiously. 'I hardly like repeating them indeed, but you being a friend—' His pale, spiritual eyes, set, lamentably, on Jimmy's jolly red face, saw it but dimly, like the setting sun in a mist, but encouraged by what he divined, rather than saw, of its sympathy, he hurried on. 'They're saying—and they're saying it this long time, that 'twas Mr. Palliser told the police the day they'd find Eugene Cashen at home ! They had poor Abina half mad, God help her, with their lies. Why don't they say it was I told the police ! Sure it was I asked Mr. Palliser to meet me there ! And that's not all,' he went on quickly ; 'it's being said now that he's hunting with the hounds and running with the hare. That he's denouncing bribery and taking away the character of other men when he's no better than themselves, and would sell his vote as well as another ! A man said them very words to me ! '

'Ah-ha ! There's the old Baby again !' said Jimmy.

'Wait awhile till I get to come at him ! Well, and what else have they to say, Father ? '

'Indeed, Mr. Ryan, I couldn't tell you the half of it. I'm in the way of hearing a good deal, and I declare you'd say it was because of the regard I have for Mr. Palliser that they come to me with their stories ! I'm sick and tired of them.'

'I know that well, Father,' said Jimmy respectfully.

'There's another thing they have against him,' said the priest, with perceptible hesitation. 'They say he's a friend of Lord Ducarrig's, and that no man could be friends with Lord Ducarrig and be a friend of Ireland—'

'He's no friend of the lord's,' broke in Jimmy fiercely, 'but I'll tell ye who is, and that's the Baby himself !'

The priest was too much absorbed in his own recital to attend to what Jimmy said. 'Believe me, Mr. Ryan,' he said deprecatingly, 'I hate these back-bitings and slanders as much as any man could. I'd not speak of them at all, even to yourself, only I thought you might be able to stop them some way. I went to see Mr. Palliser myself just now, but he was out of home. I must go again—I'll be this way again on Thursday—He was up at Monalour this afternoon, and, and—' again he hesitated.

'Have they more yet against him ? ' Jimmy roared, being of those whose emotions release themselves in noise, like thunder-clouds.

'They're saying,' said Father Hugh in a low tone of infinite distress, 'that it isn't only Lord Ducarrig he's too friendly with. It's said he's too much at Monalour House.'

CHAPTER XXVI

THE meeting-place in Eskragh of the Farmers' Society was a long and dreary room that had begun its career as a Masonic Hall, had declined to an auction room and furniture mart, and had now fallen upon evil days of idleness, with a relapse into active life but once a month, when the farmers assembled in it for their deliberations. Its windows that faced the street were boarded outside to conceal the ravages of stone-throwing small boys. On the inside their broken panes were muffled with dust-laden cobwebs. Sufficient light for the purposes of the Hon. Secretary was admitted by a tall, circular-topped window at the back of the platform, that looked into a deserted garden at the back of the hall, and still retained enough unbroken panes to be spared the indignity of being boarded over. A sour green distemper, streaked with damp, coloured the walls, which were further decorated with some very old, German, framed chromo-lithographs, that had defied the persuasive powers of successive generations of auctioneers to secure for them a change of scene. In the corner by the door a few incurably crippled chairs were huddled, one on the top of the other, as if in panic they had rushed into each other's arms. Close under the platform were a dozen heavy benches with desk attachments, refuse from a school, and on these were disposed the Society, to the number of some twenty-five or thirty men, middle-aged or elderly for the most part, representing the *fine fleur* of the farmers of the district.

On the platform were seated the Chairman, Mr. John Tobin, a prosperous old farmer from the Vale of Esker, and the Secretary, Mr. Timsey Coadey. The Vice-Chairman was standing in front of the Secretary's table, addressing the meeting. The Vice-Chairman had begun stumblingly, being, unlike the large majority of his brother members, averse from the sound of his own voice, even in as small, and what might be considered confidential, a gathering as this. What might have proved a further handicap to his eloquence was the noise of the wind, and of the rain which was beating upon the roof and windows of the hall with a violence that made it necessary to shout each word if it were intended to be heard by anyone seated farther away than on the front bench. But the noise, and the darkness that accompanied it, seemed to Dan to make things easier for him. They gave a feeling of contest and of opposition ; anything was better than the unsupported sound of his own voice breaking the silence.

He felt over-strained and irritable. 'Rattled and ready for a row !' he thought. He had left Monalour last night with Katie de Vere, and had then walked up and down the path by the lake, thinking of the chaos that life had turned to for him, until even Lizzie had abandoned the water-rats and whined to be taken home. He had then been late for dinner, had been reproved by his mother, had again lost his temper, and, on the pretext of farm accounts, had spent the evening in his own room, smoking incessantly, distracted by the thought of the speech that he would have to make to the farmers, yet incapable of steadyng his mind to its consideration. Three or four hours of dream-filled sleep had done but little for his nerves. And

here he was, on this stormy afternoon, in this dark and dirty room, with these men, who embodied for him the downfall of an ideal, waiting, in a silence that he believed to be hostile, for him to speak to them and make a public acknowledgment of his failure.

If they would only ask questions, interrupt, declare their emotions in any way, it would be easier for him. The hall, with its boarded windows, was so dark that he could not discern their faces, and his own height, together with the height of the platform, had the effect of isolating him still more. The crowns of four and twenty hats do not form an inspiring audience, and it seemed to Dan that the faces that were presumably beneath them were deliberately withheld from him by their proprietors. He began to get angry, and though anger does not always conduce to ease, or lucidity of statement, it is a useful solvent for nerves or self-consciousness.

'I have told you, gentlemen,' Dan said, selecting a hat that he believed to be Jimmy Ryan's, as his objective, 'that I was gratified by your having given me the position of Vice-Chairman of this Society, and I have done my best to deserve the compliment you paid me. I think you will allow that ?'

A muffled 'Hear, hear !' came from beneath the hat that might be Jimmy's.

'I have been Vice-Chairman of your Society, and I have been Chairman of the Agricultural Society, since my father died, and when I joined these societies I had every intention of sticking to them as long as I lived. I didn't think then that in less than six months I should be saying good-bye to them both ! Still less I thought that the reasons for leaving them would be that the men whom I worked with and trusted,

wouldn't trust me ! I've done my best for the farmers and their interests. I never spared myself, you know that.'

Mr. Coadey, behind the secretary's table, said 'Hear, hear !' with an impulse of gratitude awakened by a memory of that lunch in honour of the tractor, at which he had proclaimed his intention of bursting rather than waste the food provided for him.

'I told you I was going to stand clear of politics, and I have done so, but that hasn't saved me from the mud-slinging that politicians deal in. I don't believe that one of you believes in his heart the lies that, I understand, are being told about me, but that doesn't seem to stop any of you from repeating them.'

A restless movement was apparent among the hats, and above the roar of the rain, an uneasy shuffling of heavy boots made itself heard.

'I daresay I don't know the half of these lies, but I know enough, and too much——'

'Don't mind them !' said Jimmy Ryan's voice.

Dan ignored it.

'And it isn't only that these damned lies are being passed round about me that has sickened me of your societies !' Dan went on, gathering rage as he went. 'You haven't the pluck, nor the perseverance, nor so much as the decency, to stick to a thing, even though you've put your hands to it ! What have politics to say to a Co-operative Creamery ? And I'd like to know the connection between milk records and shooting policemen ? But because I don't call myself a Sinn Feiner, you make that an excuse to go back of your promises to back me up in things that are only for your own advantage !'

Dan was beginning almost to enjoy himself. He

had made them look at him. He could hear growlings and mutterings, and an angry voice said, 'No, faith, you're no Sinn Feiner! Ask Eugene-the-Talk about that!'

'And no more are you Sinn Feiners!' Dan shouted back. 'I'd respect you if you were! I'd know where you were! But you're sitting on the top of the fence, afraid to move for fear you'd tumble down the wrong side! You're too afraid of your own boys to hide their breeches from them and keep them at home o' nights! You're afraid of each other! Shall I tell you what a poor woman, whose son was a policeman and was shot from behind a fence like a mad dog, said to me? I said to her, like a fool, that this dirty work wouldn't go on: I told her, like a fool, that you farmers were decent men, and that you'd put a stop to it! She said to me, "The farmers! they're afraid! They'd be afraid of a rabbit in their own field!"'

The mutterings deepened and grew louder. Dan thundered on: 'I'm tired of all this bragging about Ireland and Irishmen and what fine fellows they are! And then I see all of you fine Irishmen being stampeded to hell, like a lot of sheep over a cliff, because you're afraid to say what every one of you thinks of these blackguards, these strangers and Bolsheviks—I wouldn't believe anyone who told me they were Irishmen—who are teaching, yes! and forcing your innocent boys to burn and rob and murder and are bringing ruin on Ireland and on her industries and her people!'

Dan had lashed himself to fury and his audience to uproar. The men were howling abuse at him, contradictions, foul epithets, incoherent and senseless. The squeak of Baby Bullet topped the clamour.

' Come down here and we'll show ye are we cowards ! '
' No, but ourselves 'll come up to him where he is
and teach him the difference ! '

Jimmy Ryan shoved his way through the yelling crowd and scrambled up beside Dan, his face wild with excitement and the love of fight. And, as the King of Israel cried to Elisha, when the Bands of Syria were delivered into his hand, ' Shall I smite them ? Shall I smite them ? ' so did Jimmy Ryan, brandishing a heavy ash plant, shout to Dan, ' Will I crack their poll's for them, Mr. Dan ? Come on the two of us ! There isn't one of the lot's any dam' good ! We'd squeeze them all like rotten cabbages ! '

' I'll not touch them ! ' said Dan, his head up and his eyes alight. ' I don't want to kill them ! '

He jumped off the platform and strode down the room, looking neither left nor right.

' He was like a king for them ! ' said Jimmy Ryan afterwards, giving to the faithful partner of his admirations and antipathies—(which establishes a far more intimate relation than the mere sharing of joys and sorrows)—a history of the proceedings. ' He lepped down off the platform to them. Not a one o' them dar' rise the hand to him ! " Will I strike them, Sir ? " says I. " I'll not touch the bloody curs ! " says he, " If I left a finger on them I'd kill them dead ! " says he ! '

Thus does the historian grace and honour his subject, and who shall say that he does not well to do so ?

CHAPTER XXVII

CAR and Dan rode slowly along the lonely road by Monalour Lake, the mildness of the afternoon coming, soft-handed, against their faces, and the grey sky musing over the already tarnished glory of the woodlands, over the brown, broad-ridged potato-fields, where men and women stooped to the spade. There come such evenings often in an Irish autumn, when September is learning resignation, and, with eyes misty with unshed tears, is schooling herself, like a young nun, to renounce earthly pleasures and riches, all the pomps and vanities of a world whose fascinations are still more apparent than its wickedness.

Dan, also, was trying to school himself to renunciation, trying to face Fate as a man should, to take Hopelessness to his bosom, and to shut her in, deep and safe, so that no one should guess what was hidden there. Even if Car were free, he knew—he was telling himself the same as he rode beside her now—that she was as far above him and beyond his reach as was that great grey heron that was now winging his way in strong, rhythmic flight to the far fir-trees on Fairhaven Point. It was the same heron that Ducarrig and Eileen had startled, since it had chanced that Car had checked her horse at the quiet, willow-shrouded bay which that particular heron always selected for the scene of his evening meditation, the spot at which Ducarrig had stopped his motor. But while Dan's eyes travelled eastward on the swinging curves of the

heron's flight, he was telling himself that Car's wings were bound. She was captive: a princess and a prisoner, 'crown'd queen and thralled.' Yes! Hopeless from every point of view.

The air was absolutely still; the dove-grey water was as still as it, only that now and then a coot would slide out of one of the pale islands of reeds, and jerk its noiseless course across a space of the stillness to another hiding-place, leaving a tiny ripple on the smooth path.

Gambler, of his own initiative, left the road and moved down the grass track behind the screen of the willow-trees to the edge of the water, the dry reeds with which it was strewn crackling and rustling under his feet.

'Very well, you may just wet your bit, old man,' said Car caressingly; she yielded to him the full length of the reins, and he stood in the shallow and drank. A little contented him. Car had taken off her straw hat and hung it on her arm; in the sheer quiet of the afternoon her thick, soft hair was unstirred by a breath. She smiled back at Dan.

'It was just tricks and affectation! He didn't want it in the least! What about Tara? Don't be unkind to her, let her have a drop too.'

(How dear she was, he thought, how utterly adorable!—never more so than where a horse or a dog was concerned; she became a schoolgirl, a child: perfectly silly, perfectly adorable.)

'She doesn't want it either,' said Dan, but he did not check the mare as she eagerly followed Gambler to the lake's edge, pushing close to him, as horses will, so that Dan's knee was pressed against the flap of Car's saddle.

'I told you she wanted it !' said Car, turning to him.

The smile in her beloved eyes, her sudden nearness, mastered Dan's will. Helpless, overborne, he leaned towards her, resting his left hand on the cantle of her saddle. Her face was very near him, her eyes held his. He saw fear in them, recognition, quick understanding of the meaning in his ; then—oh God ! Did he see response ?

The gentle horses stood still as in a dream, waiting, arrested who knows by what magnetic comprehension of the mood of their riders. Dan's left arm was round Car, his right hand held hers in a grip that said more than his tongue could tell. There was so much to be said, and of what avail was it to say anything ? Better for this moment to live in the present, to have no thought for the morrow, to make no sign that they were even aware of the despair that was implicit in the ecstacy, as the blackness of a storm cloud will intensify the radiance of sunset light, and as the grasp of a dying hand grows more tense as the soul readies itself for flight.

Now and again a cart loaded high with turf would slowly rumble along the yielding bog-road, or a few shawled and barefooted little girls would go padding and whispering by, or a donkey-cart would rattle past ; and once a shabby trap, drawn by an old white horse, and with a fat old man in it, jogged past them. Car and Dan sat there, unnoticing, saying little, content only to exist in this enchanted hour that was theirs.

The jingle of a little bell, the sound of trotting hoofs, bespoke the approach of some one from that world that they were both trying so hard to forget. They were still standing by the brink of the lake. Dan

was holding Car's right hand in his ; she drew it from him.

' We have stayed here too long, we must go,' she said in a voice that was low and shaken, not like her own. ' Arnold and his people will be there as soon as we are.'

As they regained the road the pony-trap that they had heard met them. Car pulled her horse on to the grass by the side of the narrow road, and Father Hugh Macnamara drove quickly past. He smiled at Dan, taking off his soft black hat, and, turning in his seat, called out to him :

' I've just been to try and see you. Will you come to my house to-morrow before you go to the Board ? '

' All right,' Dan answered, looking back also, and watching the trap till it turned a corner and was lost to view.

With the sight of the young priest and at his message, the memory of all his broken hopes, his vain enthusiasms, returned to Dan. He rode close up to Car.

' All the same, I shan't be there ! That's a shut book ! ' He drew a quick, impatient breath. ' Give me your hand, Car !—Yes—I must have it ! Give it to me ! Let me hold it.' He caught it and held it, pressing his lips on it.

' What use is it to give it to you, Dan ? You can't keep it,' she said, looking at him with eyes that were emptied of their wonted content of humour, indifference, sophistication, and that uttered only that same helpless appeal of passion that they met in his.

Father Hugh Macnamara drove on his way not as easy in his mind as he had been. Such light as

the grey sky gave had been full on the faces of Lady Ducarrig and of his friend, Dan Palliser, and it seemed to him that he had never seen two people, whose position in life might have assured to them paths of peace, look as storm-tossed, as suffering, as they did.

‘How beautiful she is !’ he thought. ‘Please God such beauty may not be a snare and a danger to either of them ! But I never saw more trouble in any man’s face than Dan’s, and indeed, in the lady’s too, for the matter of that.’ Their faces reminded him, he thought, of the faces in some picture he had seen in a gallery, that memorable time when he had gone to France for a holiday with John Coffey, just after they had both left Maynooth, before John had gone to China. He had never forgotten that picture. Two poor creatures, it was of, a man and a woman, being swept along together in a windy swirl of darkness that was a circle of Purgatory—what was this their names were ? John had a book about them—a poem—Yes ! he had it now, Paolo and Francesca ! That was what Dan Palliser and Lady Ducarrig were reminding him of. Very like them too, they were. The man with those deep eyes, just like poor Dan’s, and the lovely face the lady had ! It was as like Lady Ducarrig’s as two pins. God help them ! Father Hugh sighed ; he had a tender heart. He touched the little gold cross that he wore, and put up a prayer for those two troubled souls, that was the more fervent for the fact that they were not of his communion.

At the cross roads at the end of the lake he overtook old Nicholas Coyne, and checked his cob’s demure trot as he passed him.

‘A fine evening, Father,’ the Baby squeaked, ‘and we’re not the only ones who are enjoying it !’ He

pointed backwards with his whip, and fell into the long, many-hinged wheeze that served him for laughter.

The young priest drove on ; he would have given a great deal not to have driven along the lake road that afternoon. Still more not to have met old Nicholas Coyne at the Lake Cross, and known that he had done the same.

CHAPTER XXVIII

DAN parted from Car Ducarrig at the steps of Monalour hall-door. The gravel told that the motor had arrived, and gun-cases, rugs, and the usual agglutinations of those who travel in comfort were still heaped in the doorway, telling that the travellers had but just come.

' You're coming up to dine,' Car said to Dan, '*Au revoir, sans dire adieu!*' She did not look at him, and let herself slip from the saddle, only just touching his proffered arm. Two men came out of the house to meet her, vociferous in greeting. Dan remounted and led Gambler away to the yard.

He rode very slowly across the Big Lawn towards the Lake House. Four lines that he had read somewhere were in his mind :

Let not him who seeketh cease from seeking until he has found :

And when he hath found he shall wonder ;

And when he hath wondered he shall reign ;

And when he hath reigned he shall rest.

He had sought, hardly knowing he was seeking ; he had found—Yes ! of a certainty he had found ! His whole soul was trembling with the wonder of that finding. But the other lines were no more than mockery. How should he ever reign ? And ah ! what rest would life have henceforth for him ? It was all a mockery . . . But she loved him ! In the might of that wonder was he not reigning now ? . . .

At the back of his mind was a fact : something

practical, definite, certain, power-giving too, for money is power. The sale of a part of the estate had just 'gone through' the last of the many stages and processes of the Land Purchase Court. To-day there were fifteen thousand pounds waiting to be invested, and meanwhile standing to his credit at his bank in Eskragh. Would rest come to him that way? Could he and she leave this troubled Ireland, and go away to the other side of the world, New Zealand, East Africa—anywhere, where they could begin life again, as though they had died, and gone to that other plane that Car had talked to him about now and then? His imagination began to run riot. Involuntarily he checked his mare; he sat rigid in his saddle, and saw scene after scene, all lit by the golden light of that fifteen thousand pounds. It, at all events, was a certainty, he could do as he liked with it; he was the last in the entail. He could sell Monalour to-morrow if he liked, and Ducarrig would buy it fast enough—no trouble about that! He would let him have it cheap. Ducarrig would think he had made a good exchange! Dan told himself he was not going to sneak about another man's place, stealing what he could take. Car should come to him openly, and no one would be less injured or distressed than her husband: He would have gained the place he wanted, and lost the wife he didn't want! Dan gave a short laugh, and said to himself, what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? His soul! She never was Ducarrig's soul—nothing but his captive, and he was tired of her. Tired of her! The music of one of her songs rose like the rush of a river, flooding his consciousness:

'Du meine Seele, du mein Herz!'

Yes ! she was his Soul, his Heart ! What was the whole world in comparison with her ? He felt the storm rising in him, disintegrating, uncontrollable, shaking him, breaking him. He leaned forward in his saddle and pressed his forehead against the mare's neck, as he had done before, up in Patrick Curtin's stable at Knockariska Farm—only that now it was no vision of a desolate Erin, crying for help, no abstract ideal, appealing to his patriotism, that was overwhelming him, but a living creature, whose lips had but now given back his kiss, a Real Presence that drew him to it by every quivering nerve, as the moon draws the sea to follow her.

Perhaps it was some sub-conscious memory that was awakened by the touch of the warm silk of Tara's neck ; slowly the recollection of that impulsive dedication of himself to a Great Cause rose to the surface of his mind, and swam there for a moment, struggling to keep afloat, and sank again. But it had asserted itself. Gradually, from a mere wordless ecstasy of emotion, Dan's mind began again to consider outside things. A cloud, the size of a man's hand, came into his heaven ; hardly perceptible, not worthy of consideration. That little struggling memory of Knockariska—a mere fanatic impulse—why should it push itself in now ? He shook his head impatiently, and gathered up the reins. He would give the mare a breather before he went in. It was quite early ; it might steady him too. He set her going.

Three rounds of the Big Lawn, something over a mile ; not too bad for pace, and she had hardly turned a hair. It spoke well for her condition. And her wind was dead right too. He wished he felt as sound as

she was. This coward heart of his, thumping in his side and pumping him. He went another round of the grass, at a walk, before he rode the mare in, and even by that time it was little more than six o'clock.

Little Lizzie was sitting in the stable-yard, waiting for his return ; she crept into the house after him, and followed him to the room known as his office. She watched him as he threw himself down in an armchair, and began to try and read a book—anything to steady him—and then betook herself to her own basket in a remote corner. She did not lie down, but sat with her head up, and her small eyes fixed on him as if he were a hole from which at any moment a rat's head might emerge. Lizzie never obtruded her affection on the god of her adoration ; she disapproved of demonstrations as much, even, as Mrs. Palliser, but she, unlike Mrs. Palliser, had a soul sensitive as an aneroid to variations of mood. When Dan dropped the book, and leaned back in his chair with a long sigh of nerve-tension, she was probably unaware that that cloud that had been no bigger than a man's hand had again showed above his horizon, but, in some occult way, she understood that he was troubled, and consequently in need of the prop of her presence. She noiselessly left her basket and stole across the room, and abruptly poked a nose that was as sharp and fine as a fox's into the big listless hand that hung near to the floor over the arm of the chair. The hand instinctively gathered the little head into it, fondlingly. She waited an instant, and then, with a hop sparingly adjusted to the effort of reaching Dan's knee, she landed herself in the haven where she would be, and having given the god's chin a lick so brief and stern and dry as

to suggest the striking of a match, she settled down, with a slight groan, on his knees.

'Thank you, Lizzie,' said Dan, who was always polite to dogs, 'that's very kind of you. But I'm afraid you can't help me much.'

The cloud had become larger and more definite. He knew it now for the dedication of himself to that stricken country that was called Ireland. Was it going to be a difficulty to him, he thought angrily? If Car could face all that she would have to face if she left her husband to come away with him, if she were ready for his sake to break her marriage vow, and to ignore the obloquy, the reprobation, the reproaches of her world, surely he could face the disillusioning of a handful of enthusiasts who still believed in him, the reproaches of his own conscience! The cloud grew larger and blacker. Father Hugh, Eugene Cashen, Jimmy Ryan, such of his farmers as had stuck to him, his own workmen; he would have to throw them all over—and his mother? Her pride would be hurt, cut to the quick, but she might be consoled, he thought bitterly, by finding that her low opinion of him was justified. Mrs. Palliser's system of repressing feelings, and her disapproval of demonstrations, had been more successful than she knew, since it had extended from the repression of her own feelings to the atrophying of those of her son. It is to be feared that Dan's mother contributed hardly a shade of added darkness to the cloud.

Dan sat in the growing twilight, the exultation and the glory fading with the daylight, the hated exhortations of conscience growing louder, as the sound of the sea will deepen and strengthen at night-fall with the on-coming of storm.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE dinner at Monalour was excessively, almost over-excessively festive. The three men who had come with Ducarrig, General Morant, Colonel Frazer, and Sir George MacNeill, were all, save MacNeill, who was rather younger than the other two, of about the same standing as their host, and were all equally bent on exhibiting to his handsome young wife their superiority to him in agreeability and true youthfulness. Gradually, however, the oldest of the party, a good-looking, little, retired general, with a tiny black dyed moustache and white hair, made the position his own, and succeeded in establishing so successful a *barrage* of conversation of the special type that he reserved for the subjugation of those whom he called ‘pretty ladies’ that his fellows could but rarely make themselves heard, and had to content themselves with the minor gratification of offering to their host and Dan those harangues upon the handling of Ireland, that are so dear to the heart of the visitor to her shores, and that are the more dogmatic in proportion to the ignorance of the dogmatists.

It is not easy to say in which of these alternate conversations Dan was less likely to shine. He had been asked, as was soon apparent, in order to give as much information as he could about the mountain and the birds. He did not feel that shining was incumbent on him ; he would tell them as much as he knew of the grouse, which was very little, he hadn’t

carried a gun on the hill for two years ; and he would explain what, in his opinion, would, with four guns, be their best plan of action. He would also inform them that the mountain was believed to be the haunt of Sinn Feiners, ‘on the run,’ and he would go home as soon as he could, with decency, after dinner. He didn’t see how he could stand this cursed old peacock spreading his tail to Car much longer. He had only come because she had asked him to do so. He felt degraded by the necessity of being even conventionally civil to Ducarrig. He swore to himself that he would never again break bread in his house.

‘ I didn’t write to ask you to come out with us, Palliser,’ said Ducarrig blandly, ‘as the posts have been raided so often, and I didn’t know if the letter mightn’t get into wrong hands, but——’

‘ Thanks, I’ve got no gun,’ said Dan, cutting short the apology, ‘ I’ve no arms in the house at all now—except,’ he added, ‘ my father’s old sword, that he had in the Crimea.’

‘ Ah, I was able to hang on to my guns,’ said Ducarrig, with a laugh. ‘ I said nothing about them—I don’t think the police imagine I’ve got any ! ’

‘ It’s a pretty good risk to go shooting on the mountain now,’ said Dan, in his gloomiest voice. ‘ Even if the police don’t happen to meet you, you can’t be sure that these fellows, who they say are in the hills, won’t ambush you and take your guns from you, or shoot you.’

‘ By Jove ! ’ said MacNeill, ‘ the biters bit, eh ? How the grouse would laugh if the Sinn Feiners or the Black and Tans potted us ! ’

Ducarrig didn’t laugh. ‘ Damned country ! ’ he said, under his breath.

The other guest, a Scotchman, looked at Dan dubiously, and said, 'D'you mean to say that's a fact ?'

'Perfectly,' said Dan uncompromisingly. 'There are known to be fellows on the run on Coolowen. The soldiers have been trying to round them up with a bi-plane. I've seen it. They're there right enough, and they're all armed.'

'Good God !' said the Scotchman. He turned to his host. 'What do you think of this, Ducarrig ? Mr. Palliser says they're hunting these rebels over the hill with a bi-plane ! I think we had better let the birds alone and get out our rods ! I suppose neither the police nor the Sinn Feiners will object to our trying to catch a fish !'

'*I'm* not going to be stopped by scares and rumours,' said Ducarrig, helping himself to port, 'but you can go fishing if you like, Frazer.'

Dan preserved a grim silence. He was not here to give advice ; he had told them what he knew of the dangers, and Ducarrig had summarised what he said as 'scares and rumours.' All right, let him ! He could say what he liked.

'Well, but you know, Ducarrig,' said Frazer, spluttering and hesitating a little, as men will, when they are gathering courage to admit that there may, after all, be occasions when valour can yield, without discredit, to discretion—'Why, dash it all, you know—you can't call a bi-plane a rumour ! Mr. Palliser's actually *seen* it ! You've been away, you know—Palliser here *must* know.'

'Perhaps he can give us a safe-conduct !' said Ducarrig, with a laugh. 'You're said to have friends in both camps, aren't you, Palliser ? I wish I had !'

Deuced convenient it would be, if one wasn't over particular !'

Did he want to have a row ? Or was it intended to be taken as mere chaff ? Frazer and the other fellow were laughing. Before Dan had decided the point, Car had risen quickly from the table, and he sprang to his feet to open the door for her.

'*Don't fight with him !*' she murmured as she passed him.

'Not if I can help it.'

Car turned in the doorway and smiled at her General, as he stood, devotedly, watching her departure.

'Don't forget, General !' she said gaily.

'Never !' replied the General, with *empressement*.

Dan sat down beside him ; peacock or no, the main thing was to keep away from Ducarrig ; but what was the General not to forget, he wondered ? It transpired when the end of his cigarette was arrived at. A song was to be sung for him, on condition that Lady Ducarrig was not left to endure her own society for longer than ten minutes.

'A charming singer, and a charming old song !' said the stout little General romantically, twisting the dyed moustache, 'one of those little Irish things—I used to sing it myself, once upon a time !'

He hummed a phrase in a very high tenor, and his shirt-front crackled in sympathy with a dramatic sigh. He pushed back his chair and stood up.

'Ducarrig, I'm going to forsake you ! I'm to have the pleasure of hearing her ladyship sing !'

Ducarrig was in the act of drinking ; his face was very red. He set down his glass and proceeded to refill it. 'Just as you like, my dear fellow. There's no accounting for tastes. Do you remember your

Omar Khayyám ? I like my “ flask of wine,” and when I’ve got it I can do very well without the lady singing beside me in the wilderness ! You going too, Palliser ? You like the lady better than the wine, eh ? ’

Dan thought ‘ The beast’s drunk ! ’

He made no reply and followed General Morant out of the room. What was Ducarrig up to ? He seemed to be out for a row. He’d always been d——d civil up to to-night. Well, if he wanted a row, he was bound to have it, but not if Dan could help it. Things were black enough without that.

Car had never sung with more fatal effect than she did that night. The little Peacock (to whom Dan was becoming attached), who was emotional, and had not entirely slighted the flask of wine in favour of the singer, sat entranced on the sofa by the fire, beating time on his knee with a stubby little hand, while an occasional tear, which he hoped might be perceived by the singer, and of which he was excessively proud, ran down his thick red little hooked beak.

‘ Come o’er the sea ’ was the song the General had asked for. Car had sung it to Dan very often, and her voice, singing that tear-laden tune, had always seemed to him like a treasure-house of grief that was stored and hidden behind half-closed doors, half acknowledged. But to-night, as she sang, the doors stood open and within them he saw her naked heart. Hardly knowing what he did, he went to the piano and leaned on it, and gazed at her.

Usually, when Car sang, she looked away, over the heads of her audience, to a point in space, where, as it seemed, dwelt the spirits of her songs, and met her eyes, and informed her with themselves. But this evening she had no need to look to them ; the

song and she were one, and Dan was one with them. His eyes drew hers to him. That tear-laden tune, those so well-remembered words, in that heart-piercing voice, were uttering what he and she alike felt.

*'Come o'er the sea, Maiden, with me ;
Mine thro' sunshine, storm, and snows.
Seasons may roll, but the true soul
Burns the same where e'er it goes !
Let Fortune frown, so we love and part not—
'Tis life where thou art, 'tis death where thou art not !
Then come o'er the sea, Maiden, with me ;
Come where e'er the wild wind blows !'*

The first verse ended. Car played a few bars of interlude.

'Dan,' she whispered, 'please, Dan—you mustn't stay there—I can't bear it.'

'One more verse,' said Dan, not moving. She smiled at him, but her eyes, though they clung to his, were anguished.

*'Is not the sea made for the Free,
Land for courts and chains alone ?
Here we are slaves, but on the waves
Love and Liberty's all our own !
No eye to watch us, no tongue to wound us,
All earth forgot, and all Heaven around us !
Then come o'er the sea, Maiden, with me ;
Mine wherever the wild wind blows !'*

The General was enchanted, voluble with delight.

'Most touching ! Lovely little thing !' he repeated, ostentatiously wiping his eyes and polishing his beak. 'No, you mustn't leave the piano ! Positively I can't allow it ! If you knew what a treat it is !'

' What would you like ? ' said Car to him, but she looked at Dan.

' The same again ! ' said Dan, in a low voice.

The General did not hear him.

' What ! May I call the tune ? Dear Lady Ducarrig, what a privilege ! But how can I ever pay such a divine piper ? ' Could but the little Peacock's tail-feathers have been materialised, they would have been seen spread out to the uttermost, glowing and quivering with gratification. ' If I may ? Really ? There is a dear old song I used to sing—long before your time, of course, but you may know it—by Salaman —his only song that any one ever heard of, but you know he put his *heart* in it ! " *I arise from dreams of thee !*" Shelley's words, you know—' the tenor, higher than ever, warbled the first line meltingly.

' But you shall sing it yourself, General ! ' declared Car, ' I've got the music somewhere, I know. It's a delicious song, but it's too high for me. I think it's in that bureau over there.' She went to the end of the room, where the bureau stood, and knelt down, Dan opened a drawer for her, leaning over her, as if helping her to find the song. The cloud had lifted ; he had forgotten past and future, his nerves were clanging and flashing in the stress of the present moment, till it seemed to him that their tumult could not longer be hidden.

' Dan,' Car breathed in his ear, ' you must go away. Arnold has had a horrible letter—he's going to make trouble—please go ! He wants'—she stopped for a half second—' to compromise us.'

' Let him ! ' said Dan ; he leaned lower and kissed her neck as she bent over the music. " " Come o'er the sea ! " " he whispered.

The thought in his mind was ' If only he forces it on me ! If only I have no choice ! '

Car found the song she was looking for. She took it to the farther room where the piano was, and while the General, who had turned nervous, was still feverishly adjusting his eyeglasses, the door opened and Ducarrig and the other men came in.

Ducarrig's face, and even his bald head, were scarlet, Frazer and MacNeill looked disturbed, and showed a disposition to surround their host and enmesh him in a web of conversation. The General, with a good deal of preliminary clearing of his throat, embarked upon his song. Dan retreated to a distant sofa, and sat down, his head in his hands, his knees apart, his elbows resting on them, listening to the song with his eyes on the ground.

The Peacock, unlike most of his tribe, had a pretty voice, if a small one, and had the skill to hint at a note when unable to achieve it otherwise. Yes, Car was right. It was, as she had said, a delicious song. It was a long time since Dan had heard it ; he set his mind adrift on the remembered melody, following the words with the singer.

' A spirit, a spirit in my feet, hath led me, who knows how—'

He was aware of a presence near him : he raised his head and saw Ducarrig was standing in front of him.

' I want to speak to you,' said Ducarrig, swaying a little as he stood.

Dan rose to his feet, and waited. They were at the farther end of the room, and where they stood could not easily be seen by those at the piano. It was evident to Dan that Ducarrig had drunk more wine

than was good for him, but his manner was collected and he spoke in a low voice.

'I want to show you a letter that was left here for me, after my return this evening,' Ducarrig went on, 'would you mind reading it?' There was a tinge of satisfaction in his manner, almost of triumph.

Dan took the letter from him. The words 'By hand' were on the envelope; the writing, illiterate and decorated with many flourishes, was familiar to him. There was nothing to tell who the writer was, save what might be deduced from the words 'A friend,' but Dan had more than once had letters from old Nicholas Coyne. He read it with an anger and disgust that deepened with each line. It had to do with himself and Lady Ducarrig, and was such a letter as, given the intention to malign, might have been expected from such a source.

Dan returned it to its envelope, and handed it back to Ducarrig in silence.

'Well?' said Ducarrig, 'what do you say to that?'

'Nothing!' said Dan, 'I don't answer anonymous lies.'

'Ah—lies, are they?' said Ducarrig, grinning at him, 'that's as it may be! I should like to know a little more about the matter before I decide if they are lies or no!'

The song was going charmingly, the General's confidence quite restored. Now he was fluting the second part.

*'The Champak odours fail, like sweet thoughts in
a dream,*

Like sweet thoughts in a dream. . . .'

Was it all a dream? Dan looked down from his

height into Ducarrig's red, sneering face. It was more like a nightmare. Did he expect that any gentleman could condescend to deny categorically what was written in such a letter as this ?

' I can tell you this much more,' said Dan steadily, ' Coyne wrote it. That's a guarantee of its truth, isn't it ? '

' Sometimes one meets with statements that can stand alone without a guarantee ! ' said Ducarrig, grinning again, ' there's a touch of inherent probability about them—' he fumbled at the envelope and took out the letter. ' For instance——' he screwed his eyeglass into his eye and unfolded the sheet of paper.

' Look here,' said Dan, bending down, and speaking in a very low voice, ' if you read aloud one word of that letter to me, I'll smash in your damned face—don't make any mistake about it.'

*' The Nightingale's complaint, it dies, it dies upon,
upon her breast'*—

sang the General. Thus did Ducarrig's complaint die, returning, temporarily, into his bosom. He looked at Dan's dark face ; then he refolded the letter.

' Force is no argument,' he said, with a suavity slightly marred by a hiccough, ' but at my age it has to be recognised. I am sorry to have interfered with your enjoyment of the music ! ' He moved away ; Frazer and MacNeil, who had hovered at a little distance, in obvious alarm, closed in on him again.

The last line of the song was fading on the air in sugared sweetness.

*' As I must on thine, as I must on thine,
Beloved as thou art, Beloved as thou art ! '*

Dan walked down the length of the long room to make his farewells to his hostess. She was very white ; he saw her bite her lips before she looked up at the General to congratulate him on his performance.

' Going ? Must you ? Isn't it very early ? '

But he saw profound relief in her face.

She didn't know, he thought. The first vial had been broken, and no special harm had been done. But it was only the first.

CHAPTER XXX

FOR the second time that day Dan went home across the Big Lawn to the Lake House. As he went down the terrace steps to the bridge across the sunk fence Lizzie joined him, emerging from the secret hiding-place in the shrubbery in which she had waited patiently for him (even though she may possibly have solaced the *ennui* of waiting for him with the uprooting of a rat-hole or two). Dan stooped and caressed her, and talked to her. She lessened his loneliness, he felt less forsaken with that little faithful spirit at his heels. It was a mild and gentle night. There was no moon, but some stars showed ; there was light enough in the sky by which to see the outline of the trees, and Dan could hardly have gone astray in that well-known ground had his eyes been blind-folded.

When he came to the lake shore he sat down on the big boulder at the edge of the narrow strand. He could just see faint gleams here and there, that told where, on the still, sleek lake water, stars were reflected. The intense excitement, that he had had to master all the evening, had turned to profound unhappiness. Even as he left the house at Monalour, he was enveloped in the cloud, no longer the size of a man's hand, but overwhelming and strangling, like the net that was thrown over the gladiator.

' Is there no way out ? O merciful God ! Is there no other way ? ' was what he was saying to himself over and over again.

He got up and began to walk backwards and forwards, in uneven paces, stopping often, on the path above the strand. He couldn't go into a house. He felt he had to reach out and up into that dark sky for help from the God to whom his heart cried. Out here He was nearer. There were no limiting human barriers . . . Why should this be asked of him, and of her too ? Why should they give up happiness for a convention that forbade him to break a captive's chain, for the sake of a marriage that was no marriage ? And why must he choose the way of Renunciation, for a country that killed her prophets and stoned them that loved her—for a vow beyond his keeping, made in a moment of senseless emotion ? He raged at that fatal, implacable, inner self, declaring to it that these were not valid reasons, that his honour was involved ; he had—(Oh wonderful and beautiful, whatever the issue might be !)—he had been given Car's love. How could he desert her for the sake of his own shabby soul ? . . . Oh, it wasn't that, he groaned. No, not his own soul, that was a small thing.

The zealot that still ordered half of it, that had ordered it all, until another had entered in to possess it, awoke and joined battle. His vow had been made in God's name to his country, to Ireland. He had offered himself to be a standard-bearer—(but nothing important, his other self urged, a leader in local affairs only, and they had rejected him. Greater than he, in greater issues, had failed Ireland before now—These were trivial and local affairs, it was fantastic to consider such.)

‘ Your vow ! ’ answered the zealot. . . .

Lizzie, sitting miserably on the damp gravel of the strand, cried to him to go home. The night grew

colder. The last lights in the cottages across the lake died. The big house behind him was all dark. Dan's uneven, distracted pacings up and down the path ceased.

Beside the big boulder, on which he and Eileen had seen Car sitting—how many centuries ago?—he knelt, and laid his burning forehead on the cold stone with the pathetic animal instinct of self-abasement that forces men and women to their knees. As a dog crouches before a stern master, so he knelt to his jealous God, and kneeling, knew that for him the way of Renunciation was prepared.

The big house at Monalour was asleep. All the downstairs windows were shut, and had turned green-blinded eyes to the world. Of the upstairs windows some were open, but only those of Car's room showed any sign of life. They had light in them, and were wide open, but as they looked westwards, towards the shrubberies, their light was not likely to tell anyone that Lady Ducarrig was still up and awake at some two of the clock. She had sat, motionless, by one of the windows, in her dressing-gown, after her maid had gone away, meditating, in thought so deep and stormy that it had absorbed even the physical restlessness that had at first driven her, as, down by the lake, it had driven Dan, to and fro in her room.

Bats were wheeling and darting outside the window, and moths and night-flying beetles whirred past her to the light, but she paid them no heed. Should she face all that it would mean? Could she do so? She had sung to him, with all her heart in her voice, '*'Tis life where thou art, 'tis death where thou art not!*' She had meant it then. Her heart had truly been in her voice, it had been a confession, a promise. . . . Yes!

she told herself, she meant it still. She yielded to the thought of him . . .

And down by the lake Dan knelt, with his forehead on the cold stone.

Car stood up, and found herself chilled and stiffened. She was drawing the curtain, when she heard a confused sound of many footsteps on the gravel at the other side of the house. She waited, listening intently. Almost instantly there followed a loud noise of rappings and bangings, as if the hall door were being attacked with sticks, and kicks from heavy boots. The methods and proceedings of those organised bands of insurgents that were known as Raiders, were by this time a commonplace of every day, or, to speak more strictly, every night life. Car needed no telling, had no uncertainty. She caught up a candle, and ran at her best speed down the long corridor to her husband's room. It was a corner room on the south and east sides of the house, and looked out towards the lake and the drive.

'Arnold !' she called, 'wake up ! I think Raiders are trying to get in !' She caught him by the shoulder and shook him.

(How sodden and red he looked ! Horrible !)

'They've come for the guns, of course !' she panted, 'wake up ! I'll call the others !'

In the corridor she met Hammond hurrying, half-dressed and wholly scared, to call his master.

'Call the other gentlemen, Hammond ! Quick ! His lordship knows.' She darted to the door of one of the guests' rooms, and knocked frantically.

'Coming ! Coming !' answered the General's excited voice, 'What is it ? Fire ?'

'No, no, Raiders! They've come for your guns!'

The door burst open, and the General, in such costume as may be accomplished in two minutes, dashed forth.

'Where are the guns? We'll let the devils have them in a way they won't like!'

'In the pantry, General,' gasped Hammond, breathless with running, 'I was getting them ready last night—I'll show you—'

Hammond was stout and middle-aged, as becomes a butler, but he ran downstairs, and led the way to his pantry, at a pace that would have been creditable to his own pantry-boy. He was carrying a light, and as he ran through the hall, with Car and the General behind him, the thunder on the door increased, with wild shouts and yells, and a shot or two, adding to the uproar.

The hall door was of heavy oak, iron-studded and iron-barred. One of Colonel Palliser's last acts in the winter of the preceding year, the last winter of his life, the winter the troubles began, had been to strengthen the defences on all his windows and doors. The bars that secured the hall door would need more than sticks and kicks to master them, the windows in the area were equally strongly barred, and the upper windows were ten or twelve feet from the ground. By the time that Hammond and the General, with Car to help them, had brought from the pantry as many guns and cases of cartridges as they could carry, the other three men were already downstairs.

Ducarrig went to the door and shouted. The noise ceased.

'Who's there?'

'Th' Irish Republican Army! Open the door!

We've come for your guns ! We know ye have them !'

' You'll get what's in them ! ' roared the little General, his eyes dancing in the candle light. He looked twenty years younger, in spite of an unfortunate omission, the result of stress of haste, which the dyed moustache failed to conceal. ' Where can we fire from, Ducarrig ? ' he asked gleefully.

' The end windows of the dining-room, General,' broke in Hammond. ' Across th' area, m'lord, and you'll get them sideways at the hall door.'

' The top-landing windows for me ! ' Ducarrig said. ' Come on, MacNeill, some one come too and hand us cartridges—you, Car. Hammond, stay with the General and Colonel Frazer.'

Ducarrig was wideawake now. Car had never liked him better. Heavy and elderly as he was, he was playing the game. She snatched up two cases of cartridges, and rushed upstairs to the windows at the end of the corridor, to be ready with the cartridges for the slower-footed men with the guns. The windows were open and unshuttered.

' Put out the light ! Quick, Lady Ducarrig ! ' said MacNeill. ' Shut the shutters. Now !—Ducarrig, for God's sake keep behind the shutter except when you're firing—don't give the brutes a chance if you can help it ! Now then ! Into the brown ! '

Four shots in rapid succession followed, and a similar volley from the dining-room told that the General and Frazer had also opened fire. A reception so unusual staggered the raiders, whose nightly excursions of this kind were usually of the nature of a walk-over. Yells of rage, cries of pain, and a stampede across the gravel, followed the defenders' fusillade.

'About forty of 'em,' said Ducarrig. 'Cartridges, Car, quick! Look sharp!'

'Bagged a brace, I think!' said MacNeill cheerfully, rapidly reloading. 'I saw two fellows being dragged over into covert.'

Another eight shots, from the upper and lower windows, were sent into the bushes into which the raiders had retreated, but this time the fire was returned. Between twenty and thirty shots came from the hidden enemy, and crash after crash of glass responded.

'They can hit a house anyway!' jested MacNeill. 'Cartridges, please! We got one, anyhow, that last round, I heard him squeal!' As he spoke, the attackers fired another volley. Their aim had hitherto been wild, but they were now obviously trying to concentrate on the windows held by the garrison. All the glass in their panes was smashed to atoms, shot rattled on the shutters, and some pellets came through the openings of the shutters, and, striking the ceiling, fell on the floor of the corridor.

'They're getting the elevation better, do keep well to one side, Lady Ducarrig!' called out MacNeill breathlessly, from his window. 'Look out, Ducarrig! I can see two chaps on the move—going your way! Mark cock!'

'Right!' answered Ducarrig, who had been firing incessantly, 'but I'm nearly out of cartridges. I've only four left. Run to my room, Car, there's a case on the dressing-table. Don't take a light, you'll only draw their fire.'

Car flew to Ducarrig's room. She tore open the curtains of the window behind the dressing-table in order that the faint starlight might help her.

The window was open ; the noise of the firing was tremendous. How would it end ?

Afraid to strike a match, she groped feverishly about on the table for the case of cartridges. As she did so, through the open window she saw in the dim light a man running fast across the tennis lawn, with something in his hand, a stick, she thought. A reinforcement for the raiders, no doubt ; a very tall man he seemed to be. Secure in the darkness she leaned out of the window. The man was very near now. Her heart stopped beating. Surely she saw a patch of white that looked like a shirt-front—and the height —had Dan heard ?

She put her hand on the table to steady herself, and it fell on the case of cartridges. At the same moment the firing from the bushes ceased. She heard Dan's big voice shouting, and then a couple of shots. She sprang to the other window, oblivious of her mission, and leaned far out. She saw figures scattering in hasty flight down the drive and between the bushes towards the entrance gates. She could not see Dan, but she knew he had come in the nick of time and had routed the faltering foe ! Victory ! He had routed them ! Victory ! Victory !

She dashed back along the corridor and ran almost into the arms of MacNeill, who was running in search of her with a lighted candle in his hand.

' They're off ! They've bolted for their lives ! ' he shouted. ' We've beat them ! A fellow came running up to reinforce them, a thundering big fellow he was too, but Ducarrig got him ! '

' Has he killed him ? '

' Ra-ther ! ' said MacNeill exultingly. ' He never even kicked !—Good God, Lady Ducarrig ! What is it ? '

Car had tottered back against the wall of the corridor, her eyes held MacNeill's, while slowly, slowly, she sank to the ground. Without a sound, she fell over at his feet, and lay there in the short moment of respite that only unconsciousness can give.

Dan lay on the gravel, in front of his own house, the old Crimean sword in his hand, his face to the stars ; and little white Lizzie stood by the body of her god, lamenting.

*'Not tithed with days' and years' decease
He pays the debt He owed,
But with imperishable peace,
Here, in His own abode,
Thy jealous God.'*

FINIS

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